

The Time of Heroes

by Guy Fawkes522

Category: How to Train Your Dragon

Genre: Fantasy, Romance

Language: English

Characters: Astrid, Hiccup

Pairings: Hiccup/Astrid

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2013-03-12 04:16:13

Updated: 2013-12-07 03:48:53

Packaged: 2016-04-26 13:40:38

Rating: T

Chapters: 4

Words: 22,363

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: The Greatest Hero has united the clans against the evil of the North. Together they hope to rid themselves of a common threat and usher in a new era. But when he arrives at Berk, does he come as a friend or as a conqueror?

1. Ch 1 The Dragon Slayer

A/N:...And here's something new. This story is dedicated to Inhonoredglory, who was a great inspiration. I own nothing. Enjoy.

The Time of Heroes

Ch. 1 The Dragon Slayer

"_Don't be afraid."_

Those words have whispered in his ears for the past sixteen years. At the time they were spoken marked three events; when he had shed tears for the first time in his life, the day he held his son for the first time, and when he had been truly, honestly afraid. He wasn't a man that scared easily, not even these strong winds, heavy rains, and monstrous waves could install fear into his stout heart.

For Beowulf, son of Ectheow, squalls in the open sea were just another obstacle to overcome but for a boy with bright red hair, green eyes, a leather band around his head and just the beginning of chin hair, what he was doing out here was a mystery.

"Wiglaf," Beowulf called. "You should be hunkering down by the mast, with the cargo."

"I'm getting soaked either way," Wiglaf called back, making his way towards the bow, grasping each rope for dear life lest he be lost to

the waves. "Plus I don't think I would want to miss this."

"Nothing to see but the wind and the rain for now," Beowulf said, gesturing towards the surrounding storm. Wiglaf looked towards the sky, then back at Beowulf. "And there are no stars to navigate by," he said. "Do you fear we are lost, taken by the sea?"

"The sea is my mother!" Beowulf answered over the roar of the storm. "She'd never take me back to her murky womb." Wiglaf made it to the bow and stood beside Beowulf. "What does that mean for me?" he asked. "I think she'd be more than happy to meet her grandson." Beowulf laughed, putting a hand on Wiglaf's shoulder, "No, my son. Nothing will take you from me." Then he turned back to the sea and yelled, "NOT EVEN THIS DEMON'S TEMPEST!"

Wiglaf smiled, then turned to the men and yelled, "Who wants to live?" There was a resounding cry of "We do!" amongst the oarsmen. Beowulf smiled to himself, Wiglaf always had a way with the men. It would come in handy later when he becomes Chief. "Then row!" Wiglaf cried. "For Geatland! For your clan! For GLORY!"

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The storm had damaged much of Berk but nothing that was beyond repair. In fact Hiccup was 'helping' his father, Stoick, in fixing the roof of their house. "So what's the damage?" Hiccup asked from at the bottom of the ladder. "Not too bad," Stoick answered, inspecting the roof. "The roof caved in a bit so that will have to be repaired."

"It's over my room, isn't it?" Hiccup asked, crossing his arms. "So to speak," Stoick answered. "Well they say a little sun is suppose to be good for you," Hiccup joked. "Hiccup if your done making jokes," his father said. "Then perhaps you could head down to the forge and get me a few nails."

"And end this gripping conversation we're having?" "Hiccup," his father groaned. "Alright," he said, holding his arms up in defense. "I'm going." He turned to the large dragon that was dozing in the yard. "Come on Toothless," Hiccup said, waving his arm. The dragon perked up and followed Hiccup down the road towards the forge.

"There ye go," Gobber said, handing Hiccup a leather bag of nails. "Fifty fresh iron nails fer ya." "Thanks Gobber," Hiccup said, taking the bag. "My dad really appreciates this."

"He better," Gobber said, returning to sharpening an axe. 'Probably one of Astrid's,' Hiccup thought. "It's not like I have all day to work the forge," Gobber said. "I still have to clean the Academy, ye know." "Well when I'm done helping my dad," Hiccup said, throwing the bag over his shoulder. "I'll round up the gang and we'll give you a hand, so to speak." Gobber smiled, "Thanks lad, now off ye go. Finish helpin' yer dad and I'll see ye later."

"Thanks, Gobber," Hiccup waved as he walked back up the hill towards his house, with Toothless in tow.

"Hey, Hiccup," a voice called from behind him. "Hey, Astrid," Hiccup waved as she came up the road, carrying boards of lumber on her

shoulder, coming to stand to Hiccup's right. "Hey, Toothless," she said, while giving the dragon a small wave. Toothless gave Astrid a nod at her in acknowledgment before lying down the ground, knowing that their conversations can go on.

"I see your house didn't escape the storm's wrath, either," indicating to the wood she was carrying. "Yeah," she said, readjusting the weight on her shoulder. "Whole roof nearly came off, so my dad's redoing the whole thing. You?"

"Just a convenient reason for my dad to add another hatch in the roof." Hiccup then puffed up his chest and did one of his imitations of his father. "You never know when something like this will come in handy, Hiccup. Say the island sinks into the ocean and we're trapped inside the house. Instead of drowning we can just climb out the ceiling."

Astrid smiled, "Very good. But you know if he ever sees you doing that, he'd probably. . . you know what I don't even want to think about it. It'd be horrible."

"You think so?" Hiccup asked with a smirk. "Then it must be good." Astrid smiled, "So after helping your dad, you got any plans later?" "I was hoping you and the others would help Gobber and I clean up the Academy," Hiccup said. Astrid's smile faded, "You really expect me to help you after that stunt you pulled last week during training." Hiccup gulped and felt heat rise to his cheeks. 'I was hoping you had forgotten about that,' Hiccup thought.

He swore by Odin's beard that it was an accident and he still felt bad about it. Astrid knew that and she used it to tease him. What had happen was that they were trying to determine who could get as low as they could to the water without touching it.

Astrid and Stormfly were up next and Hiccup was feeling mischievous that day. He urged Toothless forward and only meant to make her jump. Not have Stormfly reeling back and Astrid losing her balance and landing in the water. She was uninjured but she looked pretty mad when she came up. Hiccup had apologized fervently, but she didn't say a word to him the entire day.

But to be honest, she wasn't mad at him, she actually thought it was pretty funny but she thought Hiccup deserved a bit of punishment for the mean trick he pulled. "How many times do I have to apologize for that?" Hiccup asked. Astrid smirked and cocked one of her eyebrows.

Hiccup groaned, "What do you want me to say? That I, Hiccup Horrendous Haddock III, am the scum of the earth. I am the lowliest of creatures, I am not even fit to wallow with the worms and-"

"What is that?" she cut him off. Hiccup gave her a confused look. "This is me giving you another heartfelt apology."

"Not that," she said, shaking her head. "That," She pointed behind him, out to sea. Hiccup turned, trying to see what Astrid was indicating to. He set the bag of nails on the ground and shielded his eyes with his hands from the midday sun, then he saw it. A small dot on the horizon. "That can't be one of ours." Astrid said aloud, setting the stack of boards on the ground. "Most of our ships were

damaged in the storm."

"Yeah, I know," Hiccup agreed. "So who could it be?" A worried look crossed over Astrid's face. "Do you think it could be Alvin?" Hiccup turned to her and said, "Only one way to find out." Hiccup called over to Toothless and the dragon immediately perked up. "Okay, buddy," Hiccup said, stroking his ears. "Ready to go for a ride?" Toothless gave a grin and hummed something unintelligible, Hiccup returned the grin with a smile of his own, then climbed onto the saddle on Toothless' back, his prosthetic leg clicking into place. He then felt Astrid get on behind him and wrapped her arms around Hiccup's waist. He felt the heat return to his cheeks and sheepishly asked, "Are you going to be okay back there?"

"I'll be fine," she whispered into his ear, her breath hot in his ear. "Just as long as you don't make me fall into the water again."

"How many times do I have to say I'm sorry?" Hiccup asked just as Toothless leaped into skies.

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After the storm had passed, the clouds gave way to blue skies and a warm sun. With this fair weather, Beowulf had ordered the sail hoisted and gave his men some much needed rest. Beowulf lay in the middle of the deck, his head propped up against the mast and he was beginning to doze. Wiglaf was on his left, busying himself with another one of his wooden carvings. Unferth, his lieutenant, who was to his right, was going through the sea charts to determine their location.

"As far as I can determine," Unferth said. "The storm blew us off course by about fifteen miles East." "Is that bad?" Wiglaf asked sarcastically, not even looking from his work. "This could cost us another day to reach our destination," Unferth answered, not taking too kindly to Wiglaf's sarcasm. "Unferth," Beowulf said, his eyes still closed. "The boy meant no offense." "I meant a little," Wiglaf said. Beowulf gave a small chuckle. "My lord," Unferth said. "Another day at sea means another day of supplies gone."

"Do we not have enough?" Wiglaf asked, fully knowing the answer. "We do," answered Unferth. "But it makes the situation that much more difficult and puts more pressure on us."

"You worry too much," Wiglaf said. "As he should," Beowulf spoke up, propping himself up with his arm. "Wiglaf, if we didn't have someone to fuss over the things like supplies, then where would we be? Half-way home with no food or coin." "Thank you, my lord," Unferth said. "And Unferth," Beowulf said. "Wiglaf is just making fun. Don't take everything he says to heart." "Yes, my lord," Unferth said, with a nod. "Now if this 'lover's quarrel' has ended," Beowulf said, laying back down. "I would like to rest now."

He then interlaced his fingers over his chest and closed his eyes, his breathing became steady and he was asleep. Wiglaf and Unferth turned to each other, exchanged looks, then smiled. Despite appearances, Wiglaf liked Unferth and knew that the feeling was mutual. In truth he liked to bicker with Unferth for he knew that he would always put up a good argument and Wiglaf always enjoyed a good

debate.

Hours passed, Unferth reviewed his charts, Beowulf slept in the warmth of the sun, and Wiglaf's block of wood had slowly turned into a small soldier the size of his thumb, complete with sword and shield. "How many does that make?" Unferth asked. "Seventeen," answered Wiglaf, placing the figure in his knapsack, with the others he has made. "How many more will you make?" he asked. "Until I feel I have enough," was Wiglaf's reply. Unferth nodded and went back to the charts. Wiglaf put his knife to another block a wood, intending to start anew, when suddenly the watchman at the bow cried, "Land, ho!".

This roused Beowulf from his sleep. He stood up and made for the bow, with Wiglaf and Unferth in tow. When they reached the watchman, they saw it: an island off in the distance. "Unferth?" Beowulf asked. "It's not on the charts," he answered with a shake of his head.

"Can we pass it?" Wiglaf asked. "We can," Unferth answered. "But it would be unwise."

"This island isn't on the charts, yet is close to our destination, and therefore can be used as a base of operations."

"How far are we from the lands of the North?" "When we left Geatland, we were about forty miles away. If we land on this island, then we should be twenty-five miles, maybe less." Unferth turned to Beowulf and said, "My lord this island could be filled with untapped resources. Food, fresh water, maybe even some medicinal herbs."

"Or could be populated with hostile natives," Wiglaf added. "That is a possibility," Unferth acknowledged. "But its nothing we haven't handled before." Beowulf stood silent for a moment, weighing his options. They could continue on, they had more than the necessary amount of supplies needed but the storm added more unknown variables.

If they go to the island, then there are four possible outcomes: The island is completely devoid of life but could still be used as a staging ground, the island is uninhabited but has fresh water and food, there are people living on the island and they are friendly, or there are people there and they are hostile. But even if they were hostile, its nothing that they couldn't overcome. He turned and viewed the dozens of ships behind his, the flagship. There were many ships of different designs and origins, reflecting the diverse force he was leading.

There were the drekars that were used by his people, the brothers Vainamoinen and Ilmarinen, their kinsmen, Lemminkainen, and Vercingetorix and his Celts. There were boats with flat bottoms and used a stern-mounted hanging central rudder called cogs that were used by Roland, his war captain, and his Paladins.

Then there was Iolaus of Marathon and Cicero with his Centurion Legionaries who used vessels called triremes. Ships with three decks stacked on top of each other to position more oarsmen and a bronze prow designed for ramming and sinking enemy ships.

Song Wu and his forces used strange ships known as junks. Instead of the rounded, smooth designs he had typically seen on ships; junks

were more squared, even the sails. But its designed for carrying large amounts of cargo and that made them very valuable. Pratap, the leader of a tribe known as the Rajput, used small vessels usually used for trading that had been converted for war called Dhows.

Altogether, Beowulf's forces numbered in the tens of thousands and more were on the way. If landing on this island resulted in battle, which he hoped it didn't, he had the men and the resources to win. And then Beowulf made his decision, he turned to Unferth and his son, then to his thanes and cried, "To your oars, thanes!"

His men responded quickly and where in position in moments. "Fortune smiles on us, men! After a bitter night, fate has given us clear skies and a place for rest. Heave your oars and we will have a place for a few nights, then we will continue on our journey."

The men gave a resounding cry of acknowledgment. "But reserve some of your strength should this worse happen," he added somberly, before turning back to the bow. "Unferth," he said. "Signal the other ships to follow us to the island."

"It shall be done, my lord." Unferth said before bowing, then moving towards the stern.

Beowulf then moved to stand beside Wiglaf once more. "Get your blade, Wiglaf," Beowulf ordered. Wiglaf turned to him, surprised, and asked, "Do you think it will come to that?" Wiglaf had never been in battle, he was too young. In fact the only reason he ever even carried a sword as for sparring practice with with his father or, occasionally, Unferth.

"It never hurts to be prepared," he answered, starring off into the distance. He then turned to Wiglaf, his blue eyes soft and serene; Wiglaf had never seen him like this. "Go, Wiglaf," he whispered. Wiglaf then turned and went to his belongings. Beowulf then turned back to the island that was closer now. A cool breeze blew through his hair and tickled his cheek; then came a strong smell of roses. He then whispered, "Is that you..._Bria_?"

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"Here are the nails," Stoick said, kneeling down on the ground, sifting through the leather bag of nails. "But where is Hiccup?" After Hiccup didn't return home, Stoick had gone looking for him. Halfway to Gobber's, Stoick had found a bag of nails and a stack of wooden boards. The nails were definitely from Hiccup but were did the boards come from? 'Gobber will know,' Stoick concluded.

He picked up the bag of nails, then the stack of boards. As he he stood up, a breeze came from behind, blowing a nearby rose bush, causing its loose petals to take flight. He watched the petals fly out to sea before making his way to Gobber's.

"The nails were for Hiccup," Gobber told Stoick. "And Astrid had the boards." "Well that explains were he went," Stoick said, rolling his eyes. "Running off to spend time with a girl." "Yeah," Gobber said, nodding. "Reminds me of you." "What you talking about?" Stoick asked, even though he knew full well what he meant. "Come on," Gobber said. "How many times did you sneak away from your dad to go see

Valhallarama?"

A blush could barely be seen on Stoick's cheeks but it was there. "That's different," Stoick said. "The only difference," Gobber said. "Is that Hiccup probably hasn't snuck out at night yet." "Well have you seen them?" Stoick asked, purposely changing the subject. "Not at the same time," Gobber answered. "Probably went off flying," Stoick said, exasperated. "I thought we were passed this, Gobber. I thought we were starting to understand each other. I thought-"

"What is that?" Gobber asked, interrupting him. "I'm trying to tell you the problems I'm having with Hiccup." Stoick answered, confused as to why Gobber would asked that. "Not that," Gobber said, shaking his head. "That," he said, pointing behind Stoick, out to sea.

Stoick turned around and just of the horizon was a boat. "No one in their right mind would have sailed through that storm," Stoick asserted. "Then that must be someone _not _in their right mind." Gobber said. "Alvin?" Stoick asked. "I don't think even he's foolish enough to brave a storm like that," Gobber said. "Then who?" Stoick asked, more to himself. He looked around for a moment and wished that he knew where Hiccup was. He turned back to Gobber and said, "Go find Spitelout. Tell him to gather the others, we may have a fight on our hands.

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As they neared the horizon, Hiccup and Astrid had discovered that the one ship turned into two ships, then three, then four, then ten. More and more came into view, until they spanned across the entire horizon line. A fleet like this easily dwarfed that of Berk's. "There must be dozens of them," Astrid said, looking in awe of all the ships. "Hundreds, even." She then turned to Hiccup and asked, "Where you do you think they're heading?" "After a storm like last night," Hiccup said. "They'd probably head to the nearest land to rest and resupply." "They must be heading for Berk then," Astrid concluded. Hiccup watched as the ships steadily began to pick up speed, the gap between them and Berk beginning to close.

"Look at those over there," Astrid said, pointing to strange looking ships on the left flank of the fleet. These were ships neither Hiccup nor Astrid had ever seen, some ships with multiple decks stacked on top of each other and others had strange squared sails. The possibility of this being Alvin the Treacherous, leader of the Outcasts, was becoming very unlikely. "Let's go in for a closer look, see who it really is," Astrid said. "Right," Hiccup nodded, before maneuvering Toothless to descend, heading towards the lead ship.

What Hiccup assumed was the flagship was a long drekar with a dark blue sail. As he neared the ship, he saw that the sail depicted a profile of a wolf in a circle a lighter blue than the sail, then his attention fell on the man at the bow. He was the only one who wasn't busying himself with some duty on the ship and Hiccup determined from the way he stood proudly at the bow, that he was the leader.

He was tall and muscular, from what Hiccup could tell from the distance he was at and the armor he was wearing. He wore the traditional mail shirt, with breastplate, cape, vambraces, dark blue

trousers, faulds and leather boots. His hair and matching beard so blonde that it almost appeared white, and there was a piece of leather tied around his forehead. Before he could take in this man's appearance further, he turned to their direction and saw them. He stared at them briefly before shouting, "Dark Seeker!"

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"Dark Seeker!" Beowulf shouted. Unferth, Wiglaf, and the few remaining thanes, brothers Eofor and Wulf, who were not rowing, moved to the bow to stand beside Beowulf. They immediately saw it: a black dragon that every warrior on that ship recognize, a Dark Seeker. Before Wiglaf was born, the land of the Geats was besieged much in the same way Berk had been. Dragons would routinely attack and decimate many villages, one in particular, however. That of the Waegmundings, Beowulf's clan.

Many types would attack and wouldn't be much of a problem but one stood out among the others, one was more feared than all the rest. Dark Seekers were among the deadliest of dragons, using the night sky to cloak their bodies. Many called it cowardice, using the darkness to strike when they are most vulnerable. Beowulf, however, thought it was brilliant; after all a dragon could never hold its ground in open combat against him. That was proven when he destroyed a Dark Seeker that plagued his land for many years that was known only as Grendel.

Eofor raised his bow and took aim. "Stay that arrow, Eofor," Beowulf ordered. His men turned to him, confused looks on their faces. "Look closely," Beowulf said, indicating towards the retreating dragon. They looked closer and even though they didn't have the extraordinary vision that their chief had, they were still able to make out two figures on the back of the dragon. "Are there... people on that dragon?" Wulf asked, not quite believing what he is seeing. "It appears so," Wiglaf said. "Who ever these people are," Beowulf said, still watching the dragon. "They've found a way to tame dragons." He turned to the others and said, "We may be in trouble." "Look on the bright side," Wiglaf said. "At least we know that its inhabited."

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"That definitely wasn't Alvin," Astrid said, as Toothless sped away back towards Berk. "That's for sure," Hiccup agreed. "But who exactly were they?" Astrid asked. "No idea," Hiccup said. "But did you notice they didn't shoot even a single arrow at us?" "Are you saying they let us go?" Astrid asked. "It sure appears that way," Hiccup said. "Why would they do that?" Astrid asked. "I don't know." Hiccup answered.

"There must be a reason," Astrid asserted. "The smart thing would be to shoot us down." "Maybe they don't see us as the enemy," Hiccup suggested, hoping that these people intended no harm. "Or maybe they don't see us as a threat." Astrid added somberly.

That sentence made Hiccup shutter a bit. The man at the bow had looked at them so calmly, without a hint of fear in his face. What kind of a man would not see a Night Furry (or Dark Seeker as the man had put it) as a threat? 'A man who had seen and done a lot in his lifetime,' Hiccup concluded. "Toothless," Hiccup said. The dragon

looked at him in acknowledgment. "I need you to go faster, buddy, okay?" Toothless gave a short nod then sped faster towards the island.

They landed just outside Hiccup's house and saw the mass of people heading towards docks. He scanned the crowd for any of his friends. "Fishlegs," Hiccup called. "Where's everyone going?" "Docks," Fishlegs answered. "Lot of ships heading this way."

"Where's my dad?" Hiccup asked. "Docks," Fishlegs repeated, then he blended in into the crowd and was gone. "We have to get to my dad," Hiccup said to Astrid. "Tell him what we saw." "Tell him what exactly?" Astrid asked. "He already knows they're coming." "But he doesn't know that this isn't Alvin or that they didn't shoot at us." Toothless then took flight and headed to the docks.

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"If we are truly in danger," Eofor asked. "Then why did you have me hold my arrow." Beowulf looked at him and said, "Because they had a dragon and they didn't shoot first. Why would that be?" "They're scouts?" Wulf offered. "They were children," Beowulf said. "Probably not even as old as Wiglaf." "My lord," Unferth said. "Just because they didn't attack us doesn't mean that they mean us no harm. For all we know they could be gathering their full strength as we speak."

"What would you have me do, Unferth?" Beowulf asked. "Would you have me kill children now?" "I would have you do everything in your power to preserve your army," Unferth answered. Beowulf looked Unferth in the eye and asked, "Do you doubt me, Unferth?" Without a moments hesitation, Unferth answered, "I doubted you once before, my lord. I shall never do it again."

Beowulf raised an eyebrow. "Without good cause, my lord," Unferth added. Beowulf nodded. Experience had taught him that the actions of a commander should always be called into questioned every now and again. "Unferth," he addressed. "Signal the ships to hold back until I say so. We will scout the area ourselves." Unferth bowed and then made his way back to the stern.

"Wulf, Eofor," the two men nodded their acknowledgments. "Tell the other thanes to prepare themselves for battle." The brothers nodded and went about their business. "Wiglaf..." he said looking at his son. Wiglaf looked back at his father with large green eyes. Not since he was a child did he seem so small. "Be safe, Wiglaf." The boy nodded and went back to cargo hold, to gather his belongings.

If this island led his men to a fiery death, he would be the one out front when all Hel is unleashed. His left hand drifted to the hilt of his sword, "Hrunting, old friend," he whispered. "We may have some knife work need doing."

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Stoick and Gobber stood over looking the docks. They watched as a drekar with a blue sail slowly moved into the harbor. "Dad," Stoick heard his son call from behind him. He turned and saw Hiccup and Astrid on top of Toothless sail over the crowd that had gathered. "Hiccup," he called. They landed right beside Stoick, where Astrid

jumped off Toothless and Hiccup close behind her. "Where've you two been?" Gobber asked. "We were..." before Hiccup could finish he saw the position of the ship. "How could they have gotten this far?"

"Good sails and strong winds, I think," Gobber said. "Wait," Stoick said. "You went out there?" "We thought it might've been Alvin," Astrid said. "So we went out to see." "Well was it?" Stoick asked. "No," Hiccup said, shaking his head. "It's someone else." "Did you see any signs or markings that indicated as to who it was?" Stoick asked. "The sail of the lead ship had a wolf on it." Astrid said. Gobber stepped forward and asked, "A wolf? Are you sure?"

Both Hiccup and Astrid nodded. "Was it just a wolf's head or was it a full wolf?" Stoick asked. "Full wolf," Hiccup said. "Encased in a circle?" Gobber asked. Hiccup and Astrid turned to each other with raised eyebrows. "Yeah," Astrid said. "How did you know?" Gobber didn't answer. He turned to Stoick and said, "It couldn't be, could it? I mean it's just a story."

"We'll see soon enough," Stoick said. Then he turned to Spitelout and said, "Keep the men here, I'll deal with this myself. If things go badly, use the dragons keep as many off the island as you can." Spitelout nodded. He then turned to Hiccup and said, "You and Gobber will accompany me." With that, he headed down to the docks, with Gobber and Hiccup in tow.

Stoick, Gobber, and Hiccup just made it to the end of the docks just as the boat laid off the port. "Hail!" cried one of the men in the boat, wearing a black cloak with blood-red trimming and matching tunic. "We wish to make port, will you allow it?" "I wish to know who asks for it before I give it," Stoick called back. "I'm Unferth and ask in the name of my lord and master," answered the man. "And who is your master?" Stoick asked. "Beowulf of Geatland," Unferth answered. "Ha!" Stoick laughed humorlessly. "Everyone knows that Beowulf is just a legend. A story to set an example of how to hunt dragons."

A second man came up from behind of Unferth, put his hand to his mouth and said, "Hail! I am Beowulf, son of Ectheow, and I am no story. We offer trade for friendship, will you allow it?" Stoick turned to Gobber. He silently nodded, Stoick turned back to the boat. "You may make port," Stoick called back. With permission given, the oarsmen began rowing the boat to the dock. When they neared, the oars on the port side were pulled in and a rope was thrown to the three Hooligans on the pier. Stoick and Gobber pulled the boat to the dock, while Hiccup tied it off.

As soon as the boat came to halt, Beowulf, Unferth, and a young man dressed similar to Beowulf, minus the armor, weapons, and cape, stepped off the boat onto the pier. Stoick and Beowulf stared at each other until Stoick said at last, "You're Beowulf." Beowulf nodded. Stoick released a breath he did not realize he was holding. "You're the Dragon Slayer..."

2. Ch 2 Chieftains of the Great Tribes

A/N: There will be religious themes, some mild language, and some suggestive themes in this story.

Ch. 2 Chieftains of the Great Tribes

"The Dragon Slayer..." Hiccup whispered. He had heard the stories before, everyone on Berk had. Beowulf was the model of what every dragon killer should strive to be. But most of the Hooligans had pegged Beowulf to be just a legend, yet here he was standing before him. Now that he was closer he could see that his armor was more detailed than he initially observed. His breastplate was adorned with the same wolf symbol as the sail and his mail-shirt gleamed in the afternoon sun. At his waist was a dagger and a longsword that just had to be the legendary blade, Hrunting. Said to have been forged in dragon's blood, it did not resemble the standard longsword. The blade, hidden by the scabbard, was longer than most swords and the guard was wider and curved slightly towards the blade. The hilt, which was long enough to fit two hands but could still be wielded by one hand, was intricately designed with interwoven black leather and a rounded pommel with a small silver cross. As for Beowulf himself, he wasn't as tall or as broad as Stoick but he was still a man of great stature and very well lived up to the tales he had heard. When he was younger, both Gobber and his father would tell him stories about Beowulf's exploits, about the time he hurled a spear down a Whispering Death's throat and how he had torn the wings off of a Thunder Drum with his bare hands. But there was one story that was told more than the rest...

"Just one of the many names given to my lord," Unferth said, with unrivaled pride, snapping Hiccup out of his thoughts. Beowulf raised his hand to silence him. "That is enough, Unferth," he said. "I am Beowulf, chieftain of the Waegmunding clan..." He then turned to Unferth. "This is Unferth, son of Ecglaf. My most trusted thane." Unferth bowed at the introduction, a small smile playing on his lips. Unferth was a tall, slender man with pale skin and black hair and matching beard. At his side was a longsword and a pair of handles that Hiccup assumed were daggers could be seen from behind his back.

Beowulf then reached behind him and place his hand on the young man's shoulder, brought him to stand in front of him, then placed his hands on both his shoulders. Hiccup notice that there was much love in this action when Beowulf said, "...And this is my son, Wiglaf." Wiglaf nodded at the other men on the dock. Wiglaf was a bit taller than Hiccup as well as more muscular. His hair was a bright red with it tied in a small ponytail, like Beowulf's. Wiglaf's eyes then fell on Hiccup and he said, "You're the one riding the Dark Seeker."

"Dark Seeker?" Stoick asked, turning to Hiccup. "Its what they call Night Furies," Hiccup said, turning to his father. "So it was you," Wiglaf said with a smile. "Wait," Hiccup said, turning back to face Geats. "You didn't know for sure?" Wiglaf shrugged, "Why else would you be here?" "Wiglaf!" Beowulf scolded.

"He is my son," Stoick said, mirroring Beowulf's actions by bringing Hiccup to stand before him with his hands on his shoulders. "Hiccup Horrendous Haddock III," Stoick said before turning to Gobber. "This is Gobber the Belch, our smith." Gobber nodded. "...And I am Stoick the Vast, chieftain of the Hairy Hooligans." Beowulf nodded to the chieftain, stepped towards him and said, "We thank you, Stoick, for your generosity and your hospitality." Beowulf stood before Stoick his hand raised in greeting.

Stoick moved away from Hiccup, took the hand and shook it. "I have to ask," Stoick said. "For years I have heard the stories and believed them to be just that: stories. But tell me, are they true?" Beowulf shrugged as the two men released their grip. "Depends on which story you've heard." "How about the one about you and the Frisians," Gobber said, coming to stand next to Stoick. "I always liked that one." "That one is true," Beowulf said. "But that one also depends on which version you've heard." "The way I heard it," Stoick said. "Was that you personally lead your men to victory against the Frisians, defeating them nearly single-handedly."

"Is that really how it happened, father?" Wiglaf asked as he grabbed his knapsack off the boat, his sword, a quiver of arrows and a bow strapped to the back of it, then throwing it over his shoulder. "No Wiglaf," Beowulf said, shaking his head with a smile. "The Frisian encounter was far less dramatic than most people would say." "Well," Gobber said. "What really happened?" "I'd be happy to tell you any tale you wish, but first I wish to offload my men and get them on solid ground." He then turned to Stoick and asked, "If that is alright?" "Yes, of course," Stoick nodded.

Beowulf turned to Unferth and said, "Signal the men to make port and to began offloading cargo." "It shall be done, my lord," Unferth said, taking a bow, then getting back onto the boat. He moved to the stern and began to release caged birds. The men on the dock watched as the birds began to fly out sea and Hiccup, with his hand shielding his eyes from the sun, realized they were messenger birds. He continued to watch the birds until they were out of sight. Beowulf then went over to Stoick and said, "I have more than fifty-thousand men at arms. Many have lost supplies, my main concern is that they have some hot food and warm beds. Can you accommodate us?" Stoick turned to Gobber, who shrugged. "It might be a tight fit, but we may be able to squeeze everyone in."

Beowulf nodded. "Beowulf," Stoick addressed. Beowulf turned to him and asked, "Yes, Chieftain?" "What are your intentions?" Stoick asked. "What do you mean?" Beowulf asked. "I mean," Stoick said. "That you have a great army here. What do you intend to do with it?" "Something that I do not wish to be spoken about without my captains," Beowulf said. "Is there a place we can speak?"

"The Great Hall is as good as a place as any," Gobber said. "And even better for stories and merry-making I imagine," Unferth said. "A few stories and a song or two would be nice," smiled Gobber. "You may have as many stories and songs as you wish, Gobber," Beowulf announced. Then he turned to his thanes offloading their cargo.

"But the merry-making belongs to all of us!" Resounding cheer among the men, then Beowulf turned back to Stoick and said, "But before there is any merry-making to be had, I must know Stoick: how is it that you've been able to bend dragons to your will?" Stoick then smiled and said, "That would be Hiccup's doing." Beowulf turned to the young Hooligan, a surprise look on his face, mirroring that of the other Geats.

"You," he said, gesturing to Hiccup. "You're the one who tamed the Dark Seeker?" Hiccup smiled sheepishly. "Yeah," he laughed nervously. "This...boy," Unferth stammered. "Has tamed the same dragon as the Grendel-beast?" "Grendel was a Night Fury?" Gobber asked. The story of Beowulf that everyone knew was his battle with the dragon,

Grendel. But there are conflicting accounts, from him being a Monstrous Nightmare to a Skrill but never as a Night Furry. "A demon as black as a night," Unferth stated. "Scourge of the Geats: Grendel."

"That will do, Unferth," Beowulf said, nodding to him. Beowulf stepped towards Hiccup and began to circle him, his hand on his chin. A knot began to form in Hiccup's stomach and time seemed to slow, he felt like prey under Beowulf's eyes; as if at any moment, this great hunter will sink his claws into him and rip away the flesh from his body. 'This must have been how Grendel felt at the end,' mused Hiccup.

After only one pass, Beowulf lowered himself before Hiccup, so they were at eye level. He then took his small hands into his own large ones, his eyes combing over them, as if searching for something. Beowulf's grip was gentle, which Hiccup did not expect, his fingers grazed over his palms and fingers. "You work in the forge," he stated, not taking his eyes off his hands. "For quite sometime, it seems. But you prefer the pen over the hammer." Hiccup's eyes widened, 'He can gather all this information just from my hands?' He then rolled up Hiccup's sleeves, inspecting his wrists and forearms. "You are no Ilmarinen," he continued. "But you do have some skill."

Hiccup knew of Ilmarinen too, he was one of those figures from legend that you heard about growing up, just like Beowulf. Beowulf's eyes then locked on Hiccup's and he asked, "So how was it that you were able to tame the Dark Seeker." Hiccup stood silent there for a moment and felt as if the eyes of the world were upon him. He exhaled and said, "I didn't tame Toothless. I befriended him."

"Toothless?" Beowulf asked, releasing his hands. "From the retractable teeth, correct." "Yes," Hiccup answered, nodding. "Does he have a mustache yet?" Beowulf asked. "A what?" Hiccup asked, confused. "Grendel was an old dragon," Beowulf said. "At a certain age, Dark Seekers grow two long 'whiskers' just below their nose and it resembles a mustache. So it can be assumed that your 'Toothless' is still young." Hiccup stood there with his mouth agape, so little was known of Night Furies in general that Hiccup was amazed at any new information.

"How much do you know about Night Furies?" Hiccup asked. Beowulf shrugged as he stood up to his full height. "Only what I've learned from Grendel. Yet, what I have learn from slaying dragons probably pales in comparison from befriending them, which is no small task, I imagine." Hiccup gave a small chuckled, remembering what he had to do earn Toothless' trust. "It wasn't easy," Hiccup admitted. "But it was worth it to have friend like Toothless." "If only there were more of you out there, Hiccup, son of Stoick," Beowulf remarked somewhat sadly. "There would be a lot less pain in the world." Hiccup wasn't sure what Beowulf meant by this but before he could, Beowulf turned to Stoick and said, "Lead on to your hall, Stoick the Vast."

Stoick nodded, turned, and began walking back towards the village, with Gobber, Beowulf, and Unferth following. As the men passed by Hiccup, Beowulf took a long sidelong glance at him. Time slowed again and Beowulf's blue eyes bore into him like an arrow. When he turned his gaze away, Hiccup released the breath he wasn't aware that he was holding. He watched Beowulf walk away from him, a tight grip on the

scabbard just below the hilt of his sword. That's when Hiccup noticed something tucked underneath the vambrace of his left arm. He narrowed his eyes to get a better look, and saw that it was a piece of cloth.

"How'd you do that?" Wiglaf asked, snapping Hiccup out of his thoughts. "Do what?" he asked turning to Wiglaf. "That," he said, nodding to Hiccup's prosthetic leg. "Dark Seeker do that?" "No," Hiccup said flatly. "Didn't think so," Wiglaf said, shaking his head. "No dragon has ever cared much for man-flesh." "Then why'd you ask?" Hiccup asked. Wiglaf shrugged, "First time for everything. So how did you lose your leg?"

"A dragon you wouldn't believe did this to me," Hiccup answered. "Size of a mountain? Scales as hard as rock?" Wiglaf asked. "Six eyes?" Hiccup's eyes widened, "How did you-" "Its the same kind as Grendel's Mother," Wiglaf interrupted. "She killed my grand-father. Then my father killed her." He then turned and followed the other men up towards the village, along with Beowulf's thanes, carrying his banner. Hiccup stood there for a moment, then ran after the group.

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"How long do you suppose we have to wait?" Naimon asked, staring anxiously at the island from the Paladins' leads cog. "Until Beowulf gives the order to advance," answered Naimon's chief, Roland, who was tending to his hawk, David. Although sitting, Roland was a tall man with long black hair, fair features, stubble and brown eyes. He wore a black tunic, dark-brown trousers, brown leather boots, and black cloaks. All of which was the dress of most Paladins. Unsatisfied with Roland's answer, Naimon began to pace the width of the deck, a tight grip on his sword. "You are impatient," Roland declared, feeding David a small piece jerky. "I just don't like being cooped on these boats, is all," Naimon said.

Naimon was older than Roland by more than two decades, with long gray hair, matching beard with a small patch of black on his chin. "Have peace, my dear Naimon," Roland said. "Soon we shall be on solid land, with a warm fire at our feet and a hot meal in our bellies." "But how many hours is it from now 'til then?" Naimon asked. Roland shrugged his shoulders and asked, "Who knows?" Then he turned to the island, then to the sky above him as gulls cried out of hunger, smiled and whispered (more to David than anyone else), "_He_ knows."

"Dad," Oliver, Roland's son, called. He was a boy with bright, blond hair, who was a bit small for his age, and as a child, had been prone to illness. Despite this, Oliver was one of courage, determination, intelligence, and a deep love of animals. "What is it, Oliver?" Roland asked. Oliver held up his arms and in his hands was a bird. "A message," Naimon said. "from our Lord..."

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"What does it say?" asked Jason, son of Iolaus. "A moment, Jason," Iolaus said, removing the message from the bird's foot. Iolaus, son of Heracles, was like most Marathoners, a tall and in peak physical condition with dirty-blond hair. His most distinct feature was, however, was the piece of black cloth covering the hole where his left eye used to be. And also like all Marathoners, he wore a

dark-purple cloak, matching leggings, sandals, bronze breastplate, vambraces, and grieves. "Come on, come on," Jason said impatiently. "Calm yourself, Jason," Iolaus said.

He then passed the bird off to Ajax, his best warrior and friend. Ajax was a man of large stature and strength, who was renowned for his courage and fierceness on the battlefield. Despite these qualities, Ajax had a gentle hand and an appreciation for the small things. "Does it say we can go yet," Jason asked. "Your father said to wait, Jason," Ajax said.

"That's _all _we've been doing," complained Jason. "When are we going to get to the North?" Jason was one to never stay in one place, he just didn't like to. But what he really wanted to be in a phalanx, to stand shoulder to shoulder with the other Marathoners in battle. 'He'll get his chance,' Iolaus thought. Iolaus unrolled the small scroll the held the message from their commander. "Well what does it say?" asked Jason.

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"It says to make port," Vainamoinen said, answering Lemminkainen's question. His brother Ilmarinen, is the one that brought him the message from their great war-chief, Beowulf. "Too bad," Lemminkainen said, sharpening his sword. "I was hoping to reach the Northern Lands for some fun." "In time, Lemminkainen," Vainamoinen said, as he picked up his staff that he had leaned against the forward prow of the ship with his right hand and resting his left hand on the hilt of his sword.

Vainamoinen was among the older soldiers of the army but still had a young man's strength. He had a long white beard with matching white hair. He wore a light-blue tunic, blue cloak, and a tall, red cap that curved forward at the top. Vainamoinen was known among the army as a magician, alchemist, and inventor, always dabbling with some contraption. "But the men need their rest." "Let them have their rest," Lemminkainen said, sheathing his sword. He was a man at home with his Norse heritage, he wore his long, red hair braided in twin tails going down his shoulders and had a long mustache. He wore a fur cape covering a light-purple tunic and light-blue trousers. "Meanwhile, I'll take all the women and gold for myself."

"Don't count on it," Ilmarinen said, setting down the hammer he was cleaning, then standing up. Ilmarinen was known throughout many lands as a skilled smith. He had short, blond hair and matching beard, he wore a bright-yellow tunic, a leather-studded breastplate, and light-green trousers. "If Beowulf is right, then we'll all be going home _very_ wealthy."

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"So long as we all do our duty," Vercingetorix said as he explained to his men what riches await them in the lands of the North. He was a tall man, but not as tall as some of the other army captains. He had long, wavy brown hair and a long mustache but lacked a beard, his dark-brown eyes still held the fiery passion of his youth and not let them be extinguish for anything. "But do not forget our true purpose here." His men looked at him with stern faces, they knew first hand the evil of the North and now, with Beowulf, they had the strength to exact retribution. "For years, we battle it out with our neighbors,

not knowing that there was an even greater threat to us beyond the waves. So great is this threat, that we have made 'peace' with our enemies."

The neighbor that Vercingetorix spoke of was Cicero and the Centurions. The animosity between these two great tribes ran farther back than most scribes could tell, few actually even knew how this feud started. That is the very reason why Vercingetorix's own son, Viriathus, thought the war between the Celts and Centurions was pointless and stupid. A rebellious son, Viriathus was always getting himself into some kind of trouble; he remembered a time that his father woke him up after a night of drinking much mead and inquired as to why the family horse wasn't feeling too well...

On the roof...

Of a house on the other side of the village.

That was a feat that has yet to be bested. But what truly earned him the ire of his father was his befriending of his nemesis' son, Quintus.

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Cicero placed on his son's shoulders, trying to ward off the tremors shaking his body. Quintus didn't like large bodies of water, never had since childhood. "It's alright, Quintus," Cicero whispered in his ear. "We'll be on solid ground soon enough." Quintus nodded, trying to calm his breathing. "The sooner the better," he said, through gaps of air. Cicero nodded and turned his gaze to the island.

'I just hope the sea will not prove safer than this island,' he thought. Like many of the other captains, Cicero had seen the dragon. The Geats, renowned for their dragon slaying skills, referred to this kind of dragon as a Dark Seeker.

They had dragons in Centuria, and they do have dragon slaying abilities but not as good as some of the other tribes, so if there were to be any dragon fighting, he would have to rely on the General and his people. "What are our orders, Captain?" a voice asked from behind him. Cicero turned and saw Aurelian, his most beloved commander, coming up from the hold below.

"We've been ordered to make port," Cicero said. "With dragons about?" Aurelian asked. "The General and his men are scouting the area themselves." Cicero answered. "If there are dragons to deal with, then he will take care of them." "And the Celts?" he asked. "So long as their swords remain sheathed." Cicero said. "Then so will ours."

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Tarabai, daughter of Pratap, watched as the other Rajput began to ready themselves for war. They had all seen the dragon and it had opened old wounds. Tarabai was barely old enough to remember how dragons nearly destroyed her home of Mahabharata. Unlike the Geats, the Rajput didn't know how to deal with dragons, despite being the fierce warriors that they are.

Many brave warriors died before even the first dragon was brought

down and every dragon that was killed took ten Rajput with it.

That was before he came...

Before the Dragon Slayer came to their shores. He showed them how to fight those winged demons, how to strike when they're most vulnerable and before long, the tide had turned. Her father swore an oath to come to the Geats need when ever they called for them.

A few months earlier, Beowulf called upon the Rajput for their support in his war; that's also when she met Wiglaf and his 'merry' band. Tarabai soon found herself among the group and had grown quite attached to the youngest, Quintus. Not romantic feelings, mind you, but that of siblings. Quintus, being the youngest of the group, was cared for as a whole but it was Tarabai and Viriathus who looked after him the most.

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"He's going to be so mad at me," she declared despondently, staring at the all too familiar island. She pulled her cloak made of reindeer fur tighter around her, trying to ward off the chill that was coming over her. Aelfhere placed a comforting hand on his daughter's shoulder, his knuckles brushing against the long black braid of her hair. "I'm sure he'll understand," Aelfhere said. "If its one things the Geats are known for, it is forgiveness." Heather smiled and placed a hand over her father's and said, "Thanks, dad. I hope your right." Aelfhere chuckled to himself. "I am right," he said. "Besides, Wiglaf already thinks the world of you, always has." "And if it comes down to it," Aelfhere added. "I'll take the blame." "No," Heather said, shaking her head. "I am the one who didn't want them to be found, I will explain myself to Wiglaf and Lord Beowulf." Aelfhere turned her around and embraced her. "My brave little girl," he said. "Wiglaf is certainly fortunate to have you." Heather returned the embrace and whispered, "It is I who am fortunate. To have both you and him."

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"They're coming up," Astrid said, walking back to the other teens that had assembled with their dragons. "The man we saw earlier is with them." She went over to Stormfly and began smoothing down her scales, deep in thought. "I wonder who he is?" she thought aloud.

"Maybe he's a pirate looking for treasure," suggested Fishlegs, sitting atop Meatlug. "Maybe he's a warlord bent on world domination," Ruffnut suggested. "Or a brawler looking for a good fight," Tuffnut suggested, pounding his fist into his hand. Both of the twins were next to the respected heads of their Zippleback, Barf and Belch. "Maybe he just wants to bask in the glory of us dragon riders," Snoutlout said, from atop Hookfang.

"Well, I guess we'll find out soon," Fishlegs said, pointing at the men who had just come up from the docks below. Astrid turned and saw the men from the docks below walk into the square.

She could barley see them with the crowd gathering around them, so she climbed atop Stormfly to get a better look. With the better view, she was able to see Stoick, Gobber, Hiccup, the leader she saw

earlier; a tall, thin man in a black cloak, a few warriors carrying battle standards, and a young man who, due to resemblance, must be the leader's son. "My friends," Stoick announced with raised hands. "We have been given a great honor this day."

"This Great, err..." Stoick paused for a moment, then continued. "...Wolf Army means us no harm. I have spoken to their leader and they offer us friendship and trade in exchange for safe port, but I think I should allow this great hero to explain himself."

Stoick then stepped to the side and the army commander stepped forward and addressed the mass of people, "Good people of the Hairy Hooligan Tribe," he spoke in a loud voice, laced with authority. "Your noble chieftain has promised my men and I a place of rest and safety and for that, I am eternally grateful. Should anyone ask whose gratitude you shall always have, you will be able to say, without having to taste a lie, Beowulf, Ectheow's son." There were gasps and murmurs amongst the crowd and Astrid was surprised to find that one of the gasps had escaped from her lips. So the stories are true, Beowulf was real. She had been right all along.

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All of a sudden, Beowulf was flooded with people asking him questions or just even trying to touch him. At first it appeared that he would be smothered by the crowd until the man the black cloak wedged his way between the crowd and Beowulf. "Enough," he said, waving them off. "Do not suffocate my lord. Any question, you may direct to me."

Beowulf put a hand on Unferth's shoulder. "Thank you, Unferth," he said with a laugh. "Your 'assistance' is appreciated." Beowulf then turned back to the crowd and said, "Good people, I have already promised your blacksmith, as many songs and tales as he desires." He then went silent for a moment, before his voice returned, "AND THAT GOES FOR ALL OF YOU!" The crowd cheered, while the dragons looked about wondering what all the excitement was about. One must wonder what they would do if they knew how many of their kind he had slain.

"To the Hall," Stoick said, pointing to their hall. "Break out mead, ale, and beer. And meats, meats of all kinds. Nothing is too good for our guests." "You honor us, Stoick," Beowulf said, the two chiefs following the crowd to the hall. "Putting on a grand feast just for us."

"It is we who are honored," Stoick said. "The stories we heard about you got us through some dark times." Then Stoick stopped and chuckled, "And in a way, lead us to where we are today." "What do mean?" Beowulf asked. "Well," Stoick said. "Your exploits had a strong impact on my son when he was younger. There was an instance where I took Hiccup fishing once and..."

"_Almost got it... almost got it," Stoick said, reeling in a fish. With one more great pull, he wrenched a large pike from the lake. "Ha ha," he laughed triumphantly. "You see that Hiccup? Its not so difficult. Its..." he turned to show Hiccup the fish but only found a discarded fishing rod that he had made especially for his son. "Hiccup," he called. No answer. "Hiccup!" this time louder._

_ Silence still. _

_"HICCUP!" a fear one could only experience from losing their child overtook him. He cast aside his rod and ran through the woods, calling Hiccup's name. _

_He ran all over the forest until he was breathless, he placed his hand on a tree to help steady himself. Where had that boy run off to? He just had to find him, he just had to. Dejected, he gave one, last, loud, "Hiccup". Immediately he heard "Dad" from up above him. _

_He looked up and saw his son struggling to stay on of the tree's lower branches. "Hiccup!" he said, relief flooding over him. He reached up into the branches and plucked Hiccup from the bows before he could fall and gathered him into his arms. He looked down at the young child in his arms, his bright green eyes starring right back at him. He was such a small child, even for his age, that the most constant thought to cross his mind was to keep him safe; which proved quite difficult at times. "Hiccup," he said, "I told you not to wonder off." _

_"What where you doing up there?" Stoick asked. "I didn't like fishing very much," Hiccup said. "So I went looking for trolls." "Trolls?" Stoick asked. "Yeah," Hiccup answered. "Gobber told me Beowulf killed thirty trolls when he was barely a man. If I could get me at least one troll now, then I could become a hero just like him." Stoick sighed and said, "Hiccup, trolls don't exist. And neither does Beowulf." _

_ "But Gobber-" Hiccup began but was interrupted by his father. "Hiccup, the things Beowulf has done couldn't possibly have been done by one man. Beowulf is just a story to inspire us to be more...viking-like." Suddenly a hint of sadness appeared in Hiccup's eyes, "But I want to be a viking, dad," he said. "I want to be just like you." Then a pang a sadness entered Stoick's heart but he did not show it outwardly. _

Hiccup was the smallest of the children born around his time and it was assumed that he would not grow to normal viking stature. But still, Hiccup had a heart like any other viking. "You will, Hiccup," Stoick said, holding his son close. "You will. Just when you're older, deal?" Hiccup pushed away from Stoick to look him in the eye. "Deal," Hiccup said with nod. "Alright, let's get back," he said, as he carried Hiccup back to the fishing spot.

When they returned, they saw that the pike had wriggled itself off of Stoick's hook and had disappeared back into the water and the sun was already setting. Stoick sighed and said, "Well looks like its leftover stew for supper tonight." Hiccup stuck his tongue out in disgust and openly cringed. "You wanted to look for trolls instead of fishing," Stoick said, picking up the discarded rods with his free hand. "And leftover Eel Stew is your reward." With their little escapade over, Stoick turned and headed for the village.

Beowulf smiled, "A good story, Stoick." "Thank you," Stoick said. "But I take it you really didn't fight trolls, did you?" Beowulf smiled and shrugged, "Depends on what you mean by trolls," he said. "I do have a few stories of my own if you recall." "You're going to tell one about me, aren't you?" Wiglaf asked his father. "Why not?" Beowulf asked with a chuckle. "There are so many good ones of you and

Heather growing up."

"Heather?" Hiccup asked. "A girl with long black hair that she wears in a braid? Green eyes?" "You know her?" Wiglaf asked. "She came here awhile back," Stoick said. "Her parents were captured by outcasts of our tribe and coerced her to steal our knowledge about dragon training. Luckily, Hiccup and his friends managed to rescue them and we sent them on their way home."

Beowulf turned to Wiglaf and asked, "Has Heather ever spoken to about any of this?" "Not a word," Wiglaf answered, shaking his head. "Neither has Aelfhere," Beowulf said. He turned to Stoick and asked, "When exactly did this take place?"

"A little more than a year ago," answered Stoick. "That's before Frisia answered the call to arms," Wiglaf said. "But that still doesn't answer why they didn't tell us about the dragons," Unferth said. "If it's Aelfhere," Beowulf said. "Then there must be a reason."

"I will speak to Heather when I get the chance," Wiglaf said. "And I'll do the same with Aelfhere." Beowulf said. He then turned back to Stoick and said, "To your hall, Stoick." Stoick nodded and led the way to the Great hall.

Wiglaf, Unferth, and the thanes followed the two chiefs, while Hiccup went off to rejoin his friends. Beowulf turned to Wiglaf and said, "Go with Hiccup, Wiglaf. Treat with him, take him into your fold as you did the others." Wiglaf readjusted the weight of the pack on his shoulder, "Never made friends with a dragon rider before," he said. "This should prove interesting." He then turned and went to catch up with Hiccup. "Others?" Stoick asked. "Wiglaf has befriended some of the children of the other chieftains," Beowulf answered. "It's as if he's their leader."

"It's the same with Hiccup," Stoick said. "Perhaps my boy could teach yours dragon riding," Beowulf chuckled and shook his head. "Thank you, but no. Wiglaf is not one for cavalry. He can ride a horse, quite skillfully and with pleasure, but he prefers having his feet on the ground." Beowulf then smiled and said, "Just like his father." "So you have no intention of learning to ride dragons?" Stoick asked. Beowulf shrugged, "I may dedicate a squadron or two to learn your techniques, but I do not believe dragon riding is for me." He paused and then said. "At least until I know more about your methods of taming them."

3. Ch 3 Songs and Tales

Ch. 3 Tales and Songs

Wiglaf did as he was told and went after the boy, Hiccup, to get acquainted with him, even though in all honesty, he didn't think much of him. The only thing that was interesting was his ability to tame dragons, but experience had taught him that you shouldn't judge anything on looks alone, so he would just have to wait and see if there was more to this boy.

Before he could go any further he heard a voice call his name. He turned and saw a boy with bright-yellow hair. "Oliver," he called

back. Wiglaf set his pack on the ground then the two young men came together and embraced. "How are you? Didn't get sick, did you?" "No," Oliver answered, with a smile and a shake of his head. "Not this time." "Well that's good," Wiglaf said.

"Wiglaf," someone else called to him. It was Jason. "Jason," Wiglaf answered back, releasing Oliver and clasping hands with Jason. "Feels so good to be on dry land again," Jason said. "The only one who's happier about that is probably Quintus." "You could say that again," Viriathus said. The three boys turned and saw Quintus and Viriathus coming up from the docks. "Little brother, here, was about to drown in sweat. No pun intended." There were a few chuckles among the group.

Viriathus and Quintus were the closest of the group (next to Wiglaf and Heather that is), despite who their fathers are. "You underestimate him, I think," Tarabai said, wrapping her arms around Quintus' shoulders in a comforting manner. "He's much stronger than you give him credit for." "I don't doubt that," Viriathus said. "I just like giving my baby brother a hard time."

"Thanks a lot," Quintus said, rolling his eyes. "What would I ever do without you guys?" "Be better off?" asked the last of the group to arrive. "Heather," Wiglaf said with a smile. He went over to her, pulled her into an embrace and placed a kiss on her cheek. They stood there for a moment, reveling in each other's presence before Wiglaf spoke again, "I spoke to Hiccup about you." He felt her tense, to which he responded by holding her tighter.

"What reasons you had," Wiglaf said. "I'm sure they were noble. But I suspect my assumptions lack the truth of your words, so I ask you: why did you not tell me?" Heather pulled away and looked up into Wiglaf's eyes and said, "These are good people, Wiglaf. They saved me and my family, and I wanted to spare them the coming fire." Wiglaf nodded, "That's all I needed." He held her tight again until a voice said, "The way I remember it," they turned and saw Astrid. "You saved us."

"Astrid!" Heather called. She left Wiglaf's embrace and went over to the young dragon rider. The two embraced then Heather took Astrid's hand and led her back to the group. "Astrid," Heather said. "These are my friends." "Everyone," she said, addressing her friends. "This is Astrid Hofferson. She helped me get my parents back." She pointed towards Oliver and said, "That's Oliver, son of Roland, leader of the Paladins and Lord Beowulf's war-captain." Astrid gave a small wave to Oliver, who sheepishly waved back, a small but noticeable blush tinging his cheeks. "He's a bit shy," Heather whispered to Astrid. Astrid smiled and nodded as Heather continued.

"That's Jason," Heather said, pointing to the young Marathoner. "Son of Iolaus, chief among the Marathoners." Jason gave a curt nod. Jason was one of the few who liked to talk but knew when to keep his mouth shut and this was one of these times. Friendly relationships between native inhabitants was key to keeping the army alive. "That's Viriathus of the Celts and Cicero of the Centurions." The two waved at Astrid and she noticed that the older boy's hand never left the younger boy's shoulder. "Thick as thieves, they are," Heather declared. "Don't let that fool you," Viriathus said, with a sly smile. "We're actually not that thick."

Astrid smiled at Viriathus' lame joke, she'd take his comedy over Snoutlout's flirting any day. "That's Tarabai of the Rajput," Heather said, introducing the only other female in the group. Like Jason, she gave a short nod to Astrid. "And this," Heather said, finally getting to the one that mattered most to her. "Is Wiglaf, son of Beowulf." "I figured as much," Astrid said. "You have the look of your father." "My father claims I take after my mother," Wiglaf said. "Is that true?" Astrid asked him. Wiglaf shrugged and said, "I wouldn't know." Astrid raised an eyebrow in confusion.

"Wiglaf's mother died when he was young," Heather whispered to Astrid. "He doesn't even know what she looks like." Astrid turned to Wiglaf, a sad look in her eyes. "Not even an etching?" she asked. "No," Wiglaf said, shaking his head. He went to his pack and set it back on his shoulder. "So where is the chieftain's son?" Wiglaf asked. "He and our friends went on ahead," Astrid answered. "I stayed behind when I spied Heather."

"I guess we should go to the Great Hall then," Oliver said. Wiglaf nodded and began the trek up the hill towards the hall, the others following while Heather and Astrid brought up the rear to talk more. "So," Astrid asked. "Are you and Wiglaf-" "Together?" Heather finished. "Yes. We've known each other since we were young. Our fathers met on the battlefield." "You're father fought Beowulf?" Astrid asked. "Not directly," Heather said.

"_This was not battle, Unferth," Beowulf said sadly, surveying the remains of what had been the Frisian raiding party from atop his horse. "This was __a__ slaughter." A Frisian war-band had landed on the shores of Geatland. There had been a sizable force but they__were no match for the battle hardened Geats. __The battle had ended quickly and Beowulf had barely enough time to __draw__ his blade before it was even over. Bodies littered the shoreline and the gulls had already begun their feast, even as a cold air began to set in.__

_Like them, Beowulf paid no heed to the cold but not for the same reasons. The great chief of the Waegmundings had been in melancholy for weeks now and even the threat of invasion couldn't change his spirits.__ Now Beowulf and his entourage were heading to oversee some Frisian prisoners __and decide their fate__."__The Frisians wish to have the bards sing of their __heroic__ deeds," Unferth said some__what__ sarcastically, riding beside his chieftain. _

_"It will be short song then," Beowulf remarked. "Can you blame them?" Unferth asked. "Your legend is know__n __from every corner of__ the known world; you are the Dragon Slayer." "I would trade every title I have," Beowulf said. "For the one I have lost." "__There is nothing to be had here, Unferth," Beowulf continued solemnly. "Nothing but fear, death, and sadness." _

_They continued __on until they heard someone shout in the distance, "SHOW ME TO BEOWULF! SHOW ME TO THE DRAGON SLAYER!" They came upon a group of w__a__rri__or__s __who__ h__ad taken a__ Frisian __from the main group of prisoners not far __off__ and were harassing him with kicks and jabs from the butts of their weapons. "Let him be!" cried Beowulf riding towards the men. "You think you are right mocking an opponent in this fashion?" he asked. "Put him back with the others and leave his dignity intact." As he began to ride away, he heard the

Frisian call to him, "Coward!" Beowulf stopped but did not turn back to face him. "___Kill___ me yourself!" _

_"Raider scum," Unferth said. "The lord Beowulf offers you his mercy and this is how you repay him?" Unferth then commanded, "Kill the invader. Put his head on spear. Do it now!" "Stop!" Beowulf cried, before any more harm could befall the prisoner. Beowulf ___moved his horse to face the Frisian once again, then he swung his leg over to one side and stepped onto the sandy beach. He then removed his cape as Unferth spoke, "My lord, there is no reason for you to get involved here." ___Beowulf placed his cape on his saddle ___before waving off Unferth's words. "Let him up," he commanded the thanes. They did as their lord commanded and stood ___to___ the side, allowing the prisoner to rise to his knees. "___So," Beowulf said, addressing the Frisian. "You wish to have your name in the saga of Beowulf?" He took a step to the Frisian and continued, "You think it should end here with me killed by some no-named Frisian raider?" The prisoner rose to full height with as much pride as he could muster, which was enough to impress Beowulf. "I'm Finn of Frisia," he announced in a clear voice. "And my name shall live on for all times." _

_"So it is immortality that you seek," Beowulf said, drawing Hrunting from its scabbard. ___Finn bent down and retrieved a discarded broadsword. ___ "Because without it, you're nothing." He then thr___ew___ Hrunting to the ground, where it embedded itself in the sand near Finn's feet. "You believe yourself to be the first to try and kill me or the hundredth?" Beowulf asked, as he began to remove his ___wolf adorned breastplate ___and advance towards Finn. "Well let me tell you something, Frisian: This is a cruel world in which we live in. I too had a dream, a dream of a wife, of sons, and daughters, and grandchildren, and of watching them grow tall and strong. But now that dream is all but dust." As ___he___ finished, he cast ___aside his mail-shirt, leaving him just in a light-gray tunic, dark trousers, and boots. "Drive your blade here, Finn of Frisia," he said, indicating to his chest. "Take my life and rob another son of his father." _

__Finn didn't know what to make of this. He wanted to face Beowulf in combat himself. Either he would strike Beowulf down or Beowulf would strike him down, no matter the outcome he would achieve glory. But there would be no glory to kill him like this, this would just ___be pure murder. "Someone," Finn cried, raising his sword in defense. "Give him a sword or I'll..." _

_"___You'll what!?" Beowulf asked. "Kill me? Then kill me! Do it! Kill me! KILL ME!" Finn couldn't do it, he may be a lot of things but a murderer is not one of them. Instead he let the sword fall to the ground and his knees soon followed. He hung his head low and awaited what fate would be delivered to him. Beowulf drew Hrunting from its place and placed the blade under Finn's chin. _

__He tilted his head upward so the Frisian could look him in the eye and said, "You see my friend, you can't kill me. Because, in a___way, I died when she was taken from me." Beowulf then turned, sheathed Hrunting, and addressed his warriors, "Gather his men up and give them each a gold piece, then send them home. They have a story to tell."_

"My father was among the war-party," Heather said, finishing her story. "After that the Frisians and the Geats would meet to celebrate

the peace that was forged that day and Wiglaf and I met at one of these events. At first I was very shy around him but he was very friendly and I warmed up to him. We spent as much time together as we could and eventually we decided that we wanted to be more than friends. Our fathers championed the match." "So how long have you two been together?" Astrid asked. "A short time now," Heather answered. "But like I said we've been friends since we were little."

"I see," nodded Astrid. They walked in silence for a few moments before Astrid's curiosity got the better of her. "So," she started. "Are there any plans for the future?" Heather stopped in her tracks, a look of deep thought on her face. "You speak of marriage," Heather said. Astrid stopped and turned Heather. Heather went silent again and before Astrid could say anything, Heather spoke again. "Yes," she said. "The thought has crossed my mind many times and I always put it off thinking that time would tell me. But now, I would say yes, I wish to marry Wiglaf one day."

She smiled and turned when Astrid spoke. "Children with red hair and green eyes," she said. "Doesn't sound so bad doesn't?" Heather smiled and shook her head, "No. It doesn't." They continued onwards until Heather spoke again. "I just thought of something," she said. "What am I going to tell Snoutlout?" Astrid chuckled and was soon followed by Heather. "I'll have to let him down easy," she said. "Do you have to?" Astrid asked, still laughing.

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"A fine a hall, Stoick," Beowulf said, viewing the Great Hall. "A grand time we shall have here." "This hall has seen many triumphs and failures," Stoick said. "But no matter the occasion, it lifts our spirits high." "My lord," Unferth called. "The thanes wish to know where to set up your quarters." Before Beowulf could answer, Stoick spoke. "Put it beside the house closest to the hall. My house." Unferth looked at his lord, who nodded in agreement. "It shall be done." Unferth bowed and went back to directing the thanes.

"So beside your house?" Beowulf asked, crossing his arms. "Do you have somewhere else in mind?" Stoick asked. "No," Beowulf said, shaking his head. "That was where I wanted to set up." The two chuckled, until Beowulf felt a tug on his cape. He looked down and saw one of the young Hooligan children, the corner of his cape still in the grasp of his tiny fist. He had straw-like yellow hair, great, big brown eyes, and a gap between his front two teeth.

"Yes?" Beowulf asked, as he knelt before the child. "I'm Nori and my dad says you fight dragons," he said. "That's right," Beowulf said. "You're not going to hurt our dragons are you?" he asked. "No," Beowulf whispered, shaking his head with a smile. "As long they don't hurt my friends." "They won't," a voice said coming from the doors. Beowulf looked up from the child and saw young Hiccup, other children of Berk, and... "By God," Beowulf whispered. Beside Hiccup was the Dark Seeker that he had named Toothless, unchained and free to roam about. Beowulf stood and made his way to the entrance of the hall, somewhat oblivious of the child still clutching his cape. He came to a stop in front of the pair, a look of disbelief on his face.

"He looks just like Grendel," he said, marveling at the resemblance of his greatest foe and the dragon standing before him. "All he lacks is the blue eyes, the whiskers, and the scar," Beowulf declared,

kneeling before the dragon. He stretched fourth his hand toward the dragon's snout, Toothless snarled at first and Beowulf recoiled a bit. But then to many in the hall's great surprise, Toothless responded in kind and placed his snout in Beowulf's hand. "He likes you," Hiccup said, just as surprised as the rest of the vikings standing around. Hiccup thought the last person Toothless would take a liking to would be Beowulf. But unknown to all, save Toothless, there was a scent on this man, something that smelled so familiar...

"Scar?" Nori asked. Beowulf turned back to the small child. "When I fought Grendel," Beowulf said. "It was mostly with my bare hands but-" "You actually fought a Night Furry with your bare hands?" Hiccup couldn't help but interrupt. He had seen many vikings fight dragons barehanded, even his own father. But the idea of fighting a Night Furry weaponless seemed insane. "To lure Grendel into a false sense of security," Beowulf continued. "We posted our armor and weapons at the entrance of our great hall. I first grappled with him with my hands as my only weapon but to deliver the killing blow I drew a dagger from my belt." "But he slipped from my grasp and only grazed his snout and leaving a scar over his eye," he finished, dragging his finger over his left eye for emphasis.

"But you killed Grendel," said Nori, finally releasing Beowulf's cape. "Not in the hall," Beowulf said, shaking his head. He then stood, turned, and began to walk away as a crowd began to form around him. "I tracked Grendel to the great gorge near the old fortress of Earnaness," he said, coming to the center of the hall. He turned to face the crowd, then sat down at on top of one of the tables. "There, I hunted for three days, until..."

There he stood, in a great opening in the gorge was the grave of many men and beast. Ancient piles of bones rose high into the sky like pillars and Beowulf had to wonder if his father's bones were among these. He did not have long to dwell on this thought before a black shape swooped down not far in front of him. The Dark Seeker, Grendel, still bearing the scar of their of their previous battle. He had chased this demon for three days and nights now, coming close to battle but he kept fleeing and firing shots at him as a warning to leave him in peace. But there would be no peace between them until one of them lay dead.

_ "Hail, Demon!" Beowulf called. The dragon's eyes narrowed into slits, blue fire burning with rage. "I am Beowulf, defender of the Waegmundings and before this day is done, one of us will lay dead, his bones left to join the others. But either way, it ends today." He then drew his new war-friend, Hrunting. Its long blade gleaming in the early morning sun, its crucible steel felt light in his hands. He took the hilt in both hands and got ready to charge as Grendel did the same._

_ They stood there for a moment, measuring each others strength, then at some unheard command, they charged. Beowulf let loose a mighty war cry, while Grendel roared in response. When they came close enough for an attack, Beowulf attempted an over head strike, trying to, at best, cleave the beast's skull in two or at least hack off a limb. Grendel acted quickly and leaped over the Geat's head, the blade missing him entirely. He then sent a rush of air from his wings, hoping to knock the warrior off his feet. _

Instead, Beowulf went into a crouching position, shielding his eyes from the wind. Grendel then turned in mid-air and landed to face Beowulf once more. The Geat then rose to his full height, Hrunting at the ready. Grendel then reared his head back, preparing his fire. Beowulf immediately took notice of this and took flight, running to his right as the dragon let loose a bolt of fire.

_ 'That's one,' Beowulf thought to himself. Long had he battled Grendel, so much that he knew how many bolts he had in his fire-quiver. 'Five more and he's done.' Grendel let loose two more bolts before he decided to give chase. Although a man of great speed, he could not outrun this demon. Grendel leaped in front of Beowulf, causing him to halt in tracks. He readied Hrunting again and that's when he noticed his position; he was caught between two large mounds of bones and he could not scramble up any of the hills fast enough to avoid one of Grendel's shots. As Grendel readied to fire again, Beowulf decided on the only recourse available to him._

_ He cast aside Hrunting and charged the beast. Grendel was caught off guard by this action; why would his opponent throw away his weapon? Beowulf then leaped into the air and tackled Grendel, knocking him over, with Beowulf on top of him. He then delivered a few good punches to the dragon's chest before he was batted away by one of Grendel's hind legs. Beowulf tumbled for a few feet and when he came to a stop, he was in a kneeling position, the coppery taste of blood entered his mouth and he felt something hard against his knee. He looked down and saw the discarded sword Hrunting, then he noticed Grendel back on his feet. Both were exhausted but one had the advantage of range. _

_As Grendel readied the killing blow, Beowulf spat crimson and took his chance. He grabbed Hrunting and with all his strength, sent the blade sailing through the air. It flew true and embedded itself in a pillar of bone, causing the unstable structure to collapse on top of Grendel just as his shot veered off course. The pillar was heavy enough to pin Grendel to the ground but not enough to kill him. Beowulf stood up, retrieved Hrunting, then moved towards Grendel, very cautiously. _

When he deemed him no longer a threat, he kicked off some debris, exposing the be beast's back. In his peripheral vision, he could see Grendel's blue eyes looking up at him. They still held the fire they had before but it was greatly diminished. "Your time has come," Beowulf whispered. "Face it with honor." Grendel hummed something as if in acknowledgment. He then raised the sword high above his head and with a deep breath...

"I plunged my blade into his heart and left his body there to rot," said Beowulf concluding his sat there in silence for a moment, as if in deep thought. He looked into the faces of the crowd, no one dared say a word. He smiled then and said, "But let us banish dark times and instead remember the joy full ones." He then stood up and took a cup of mead from the table. He raised into the air and said, "To new friends." The Hooligans raised their cups in response and they all took a drink, taking Beowulf's words to heart.

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Hiccup watched as his the members of his tribe began to socialize with Beowulf's soldiers. They began to exchanged stories and tales

while the one known as Vainamoinen sat in a corner off of the chieftain's table filled the hall with music from his kantele. Sounding like the mix between a harp and mandolin, Hiccup found himself entranced by not only the wonderful music that was produced but by the way Vainamoinen's fingers seemed to dance across the instrument. He felt that he could stand there for hours just watching him play and he probably would have if he had not felt the nudge on his side.

He looked down and saw Toothless looking up at, a worried look in his eyes. He rubbed the dragon's head in reassurance, "Its alright, Toothless," he said. "I just got caught up in the music, that's all." Toothless hummed back and Hiccup smiled. With his hand still on Toothless' head, he looked over towards the chief's table and saw his father conversing with Beowulf.

Hiccup watched for a moment while Beowulf made hand gestures while Stoick, Gobber, and Spitelout listened intently while Unferth beside Beowulf continued with his meal. "Hiccup," he heard Astrid call to him. He turned and saw her beckoning him to the table she was sitting at. He walked over and sat down next to her at the end of the table and Toothless laid down next to him. She smiled at him and he smiled back. He then turned and found himself sitting across from Wiglaf.

"Ah, the chief's son," he said. "My father wishes to know more about taming dragons, so tomorrow lets see this 'Dragon Academy' I've heard about." "Uhm, okay," Hiccup said. "And maybe, perhaps I could teach you to ride one." Wiglaf stared at for a moment, "No," he deadpanned. Hiccup and Astrid exchanged glances, then turned back to Wiglaf. "Never," he said with finality.

At that moment, Wiglaf's friends sat down on the bench next to him. Heather sat down beside Wiglaf, followed by Oliver, then Jason, then Quintus, followed by Viriathus, and finally Tarabai. "Well?" Wiglaf asked, taking a bite of fish. "You were right," Oliver said. "Every dragon here has been felled by your father at least once." Wiglaf nodded just as Hiccup's other friends sat down on the opposite side of the table, first Fishlegs, then Snoutlout, followed by Ruffnut, and then Tuffnut. "How amazing is this?" Fishlegs asked those around him. "The real-life Beowulf here, in Berk." He then turned to Wiglaf and asked, "Did he really beat a whole tribe of giants?"

Wiglaf took a sip of water before asking his own question, "Do you have any idea how many times I've answered that question?" It became quiet at their tables as all eyes fell on Wiglaf. He sighed and said, "He fought a tribe of men of great stature that were threatening us but they weren't giants. He defeated their leader in single combat and that was the end of it."

"Gobber tells that story a lot better," Astrid said. "Yeah," Tuffnut nodded. "Besides I like the one where took on that whole armada in a rowboat with nothing but an oar and a longsword." "It was only twenty ships," Wiglaf said. "He dove in and drilled holes into the hulls of their boats." "That still sounds pretty cool," Ruffnut said. "What about the one where he fought the giant bear?" "Brought it down with only a dagger," Wiglaf answered, nodding.

"The swimming match between Beowulf and Breca?" Hiccup asked. Wiglaf smiled and crossed his arms. "Unferth's 'favorite' story," he said

with a laugh. "Perhaps he should tell it." He then leaned forward and said, "Breca and my father swam for seven days and nights, caring long swords and wearing their strong mail-shirts to ward off any foul creature."

"On the fifth day," he continued. "A storm came, stirring up great sea-serpents from the deep. At first, they tried to out swim them, but they steadily gained on them and that's when my father saw one heading straight for Breca." The young Hooligans leaned forward, totally engrossed in the story. "Fearing for his swimming companion," Wiglaf said. "My father dived and attacked these foul creatures. Again and again he fended off these beasts from both killing himself and Breca. Unfortunately slaying the serpents cost my father the race." "Whoa," Tuffnut breathed. "How many did he kill?"

"Thirty," Ruffnut answered. "No way," said Snoutlout. "It was twenty." "I thought it was twenty-five," chimed in Fishlegs. "Nine," a voiced said from behind them. They turned and saw, to their surprise, Beowulf. "I killed nine sea-serpents," he said lowering himself to eye level between Fishlegs and Astrid. "And even though I lost the swimming match, I won the heart of a fair maiden." He then smiled, turned to Wiglaf, and said, "We wedded and then she bore me a beautiful son."

His face then saddened, "Then she passed from this world." He looked away for a moment, then back at Wiglaf and said, "I would like to speak to my son now." "And I would like to speak to mine as well," another voice said. This time it was Stoick. Hiccup and Wiglaf exchanged glances before standing up and following their fathers. "I wonder what they're going to talk about?" Astrid asked aloud. "Can you believe Beowulf just talked to us?" Fishlegs asked giddily.

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"You can't be serious?" Wiglaf asked, crossing his arms. His father had taken him to a corner of the hall and was told of an agreement between Stoick and Beowulf. "You want me to train the chief's son in the ways of combat?" "In exchange," Beowulf said. "He'll teach you about dragon training." Wiglaf blinked, "You want me fly a dragon?" Beowulf smiled and said, "Not just any dragon." Wiglaf's widened as he understood his father's words. "Hygelac," Wiglaf said. "You speak of Hygelac."

"Yes," Beowulf said, nodding. Wiglaf shook his head, not quite believing the words coming out of his father's mouth. He massaged the bridge of his nose, "I doubt Hygelac would enjoy me being on his back for hours on end," Wiglaf said. "He's stronger than you give him credit for," Beowulf said. "I don't doubt his strength," Wiglaf said. "I do not wish to be a burden to him." "As much as he loves you," Beowulf said. "I doubt you'd be any kind of burden." Wiglaf turned from his father, "Just doesn't feel right."

Beowulf placed a comforting hand on his shoulder. "Just nerves," he said. "You will feel better about it as time passes." "You're not giving me a choice, are you?" Wiglaf asked, turning back. Beowulf then placed both hands on his shoulders, "If you feel you can't accomplish this task," he said. "Then tell me and I won't have you do it." Wiglaf scanned the hall, looking for that one particular dragon.

When he had first come to the hall, he was astonished that the people of the island called Berk allowed the dragons access to their halls, like everyday pets. He was just as astonished to find the illusive dragon had follow the young chief's son to the corner of the hall his father had beckoned him to. "He follows him where ever he goes," Wiglaf said. "Would Hygelac show me such fealty?"

"There is no doubt in my mind that he would," Beowulf said. "Would it be so bad to ride a dragon?" "The only thing bad about this," Wiglaf said. "Is that I will have to ask the young Hiccup for dragon training when I just told him that I had no intention of it." "Better to swallow your pride than to swallow blood," Beowulf said. Just then, Unferth came over and whispered something to Beowulf. Beowulf nodded, "Song Wu has arrived." "...And so has Hygelac," Wiglaf added. "You want to go see him?" Beowulf asked. "I have something to do something first." Beowulf nodded again, then turned to Unferth.

"Wait outside until Wiglaf fetches you." Unferth nodded, bowed, then departed. When he turned back to Wiglaf, he had a soft smile on his lips. "What are you up to?" Beowulf asked suspiciously. "You'll see," Wiglaf said, walking away. Beowulf watched him for a moment and when he returned to his friends. When he did, Beowulf smiled to himself and said, "You're just like your mother."

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"You can't be serious?" Hiccup asked, throwing his arms down. "You want Wiglaf to teach me how to fight?" "In exchange," Stoick said. "You teach him to fly." "I can do that," Hiccup said. "But why does he have to teach me?" "Because its time for you to learn," Stoick said. "And who better to teach you then Beowulf's son?" "By why would I need to learn to fight when I have Toothless?" Hiccup asked. "You won't always have Toothless," Stoick said. "If you two of you get separated one of you could get hurt."

"By one of us," Hiccup said, "You mean me." "Regardless of who I speak of," Stoick said. "You need to learn to fight and Wiglaf is the one to teach you." "Do I even get a choice?" Hiccup asked, sarcastically. "No," Stoick said with finality. Hiccup sighed, "Alright. When should we start?" "Tomorrow," he said. "But I have something to give you first before you go to bed tonight." Hiccup was going to ask what it was, when suddenly someone began singing...

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"Oh, Wiglaf, I couldn't," Heather begged. "What would your father think?" "He would think you had a beautiful voice," Wiglaf said, taking her by the hand and leading her to stand in front of the Chief's Table. "As everyone else will." "But I can't sing in front of a crowd," Heather said. "Then don't don't sing to them," Wiglaf said. "Sing to me." "Wiglaf..." she begged one last time. He cupped her cheek, "Sing for me," Wiglaf repeated. He then turned to look at his father as he socialized with his men. Even over the noise of the hall, he could still discern his father's laugh.

But when thoughts turned to Wiglaf's mother, to Beowulf's beloved, Bria, there was no joy to be have anymore. His father did not

remember the happiness that he had with Bria, only the sadness of her absence. But Wiglaf wished to lift his melancholy and to have his father truly smile when he would speak of his lost wife, not the sad one that he often shows. He turned back to Heather and said, "Sing for him."

Heather nodded and tuned from Wiglaf. She went over to Vainamoinen and whispered something in his ear, his song never stopping. He nodded and skillfully transitioned his tune from his current one to one softer and she began:

_Out of the mist of history/He'll come again/Sailing on ships across the sea/To a wounded Nation/Signs of a savior/Like fire on the water/It's what we prayed for/One of our own _

_Just wait /Though wide he may roam/Always/A hero comes home/He goes where no one has gone/But always/A hero comes home _

Deep in the heart of darkness sparks/A dream of light/Surrounded by hopelessness/He finds the will to fight/There's no surrender/Always remember/It doesn't end here/We're not alone

Just wait/Though wide he may roam/Always/A hero comes home/He goes where no one has gone/But always/A hero comes home

And he will come back on the crimson tide/Dead or alive/And even though we know the bridge has burned/He will return/He will return

Just wait/Though wide he may roam /Always/A hero comes home/He knows of places unknown/Always/A hero comes home

Someday they'll carve in stone/"The hero comes home"/He goes and comes back alone/But always/A hero comes home

Just wait/Though wide he may roam/Always/A hero comes home.

A silence came over the hall when she finished, save for the crackling of torches. No one dared break the silence, until the sounds of footsteps ended it. Beowulf made his way to Heather, a tight grip on his sword. Heather searched for Wiglaf but found him gone. Beowulf took his steps deliberately, that Heather at first thought she had offended him.

Those thoughts disappeared when Beowulf put his hands on her shoulders. He bent down and softly kissed the top of her head. He then cupped her cheek and smiled, "It had been a very long time since I've heard that song," he said. "Wiglaf told me that his mother used to sing it," Heather said. "That she did," Beowulf said. "Whenever I came home from long journey, she would sing me that song." He caressed her cheek with his thumb and said, "Perhaps one day you will do the same for Wiglaf." "I hope to one day," Heather said. Beowulf smiled again and embraced her, "I would be honored," he said. "To call you my daughter."

"As would I," she whispered. He held her tighter for a moment then released her. She looked again for Wiglaf but did not see him. "He's not here," Beowulf said, reading her thoughts. "He went to see a friend." Beowulf then turned back to the men as they resumed their socializing and smiled, "I think I have another song they'll like,"

he said. He then stood up on the chief's table and began his song with the men joining in the chorus and Vainamoinen changing his tune again:

There was a dozen soldiers/Frisians, Danes, and Franks/We took them to a battle/But all their hearts had sank

Oh, we are Beowulf's Army/Each a mightythane/ We know no fear/We'll always be near/ We'll be there 'til the end

_The youngest of __the soldiers/I knew him for a fool/He asked me for a weapon/I gave him all my tools_

Oh, we are Beowulf's Army/Each a mightythane/ We know no fear/We'll always be near/ We'll be there 'til the end

_The oldest of the soldie__rs/He had long, white beard/ Even at his age/He showed us he had no fear_

Oh, we are Beowulf's Army/Each a mightythane/ We know no fear/We'll always be near/ We'll be there 'til the end

The fattest of the soldiers/He had a waist so large/We had ourselves a landing/He sank the whole damn barge

Oh, we are Beowulf's Army/Each a mightythane/ We know no fear/We'll always be near/ We'll be there 'til the end

His brother was from Norway/He owed me twenty groats/He asked me for a tribute/I sent him all me boats

Oh, we are Beowulf's Army/Each a mightythane/ We know no fear/We'll always be near/ We'll be there 'til the end

His father was from Iceland/And he was mighty strong/He'd need a whole damn choir/To sing his whole war-song

Oh, we are Beowulf's Army/Each a mightythane/ We know no fear/We'll always be near/ We'll be there 'til the end.

Lyrics by Alan Silvestri

4. Ch 4 Hygelac

Ch 4 Hygelac

"Calm down," Astrid said to herself even as knots were constantly tying and untying in her stomach. "You just going to talk to a man," reassuring herself as she held her book tighter. "A man that has been your hero since you were little girl." She stopped, took a deep a breath, and looked at her book. Is was very special to her, many a night had her father read her the tales contained in its pages.

Her hand ran across the crest on the cover lovingly, a smile gracing her lips. On the cover of this tome was a wolf and a dragon grappling with each other, their battle contained with in a small circle.

She was so wrapped in her thoughts, that she barely registered the sound of something heavy hitting the ground, followed by the clatter

of something metal. She would have just passed it off, if the same thing did not happen a moment later. She moved toward the sounds, turned a corner and saw them.

She beheld the sight of Beowulf's lieutenant, Unferth, standing over the limped forms of Bucket and Mulch, a lantern in his hand and nearby brazier helping to illuminate the scene. She was about to ask him what happened, when she heard him say, "Out like a candle," to whom she thought was himself.

Then a second figure approached, "Make sure they are unharmed," said the figure that she recognized as Wiglaf. "We don't need any unnecessary bloodshed." Unferth bent down and checked the two men, "They sleep soundly," he said. "Vainamoinen said that they shall have only but sore heads in the morning." He stood and smiled, "Such is what happens to those who drink too much."

He then bent down and picked up something from the ground, unfortunately since his back was to her, she couldn't see what it was. He let his arm drop to his side and she saw a wineskin in his hand. "Let us hope that is what their chieftain believes the next time he sees them," Wiglaf said as Unferth began to pour the contents over the cliff's edge. "Go ahead and signal Song Wu to come in to port." Unferth went over to brazier, just before dropping the wineskin near Bucket and Mulch, and picked up a torch. He went back to the cliff's edge overlooking the harbor and raised the torch above his head. He waved it back and fourth three times before placing it back in the brazier.

From her vantage point, Astrid could see a light shinning in the distance, it blinked three times in answer, then went out. "He's coming in," Unferth said, turning to Wiglaf. "Very good," Wiglaf said. "Would you like to accompany me or do you wish to return to my father?" "I don't think he would like the idea of you going down their alone," Unferth answered. "I'll hardly be alone," Wiglaf said, crossing his arms. "Regardless," Unferth said. "Your father will want to know of Hygelac's well-being." "Very well," Wiglaf said, shrugging.

He walked towards the cliff's edge but stopped before going down to the docks. He turned back towards the village...just as Astrid ducked back behind a house. "Something wrong?" Unferth asked. Wiglaf didn't answer at first, instead he continued to scan the area. "Just a feeling," he said. He turned back to Unferth, "Let's get to Hygelac before someone sees us." Unferth nodded as Wiglaf then headed for the landing above the docks, with Unferth in tow.

Astrid waited until they passed from sight before coming out of her hiding spot. She moved as quickly and as quietly as she could to the brazier to check on the two sleeping vikings. Unferth was correct, they were sleeping soundly and had the distinct smell of alcohol on their breaths. 'There's no way that Stoick would believe any story they told,' Astrid thought. 'So he will have to believe me.'

::

Hiccup would have been able to see the last glimpses of blond hair disappearing into the darkness above the docks had he left the hall a little earlier. But even if he had, he probably wouldn't have

noticed, to many thoughts running through his head. The events of the day had not left him much time to process his feelings and even now that he was alone (aside from Toothless) and finally able to sort them out, he still didn't know anything for sure. Ever since he was a child, Beowulf had been his hero, the one that had inspired him to go out there hunt dragons. 'And trolls,' he reminded himself.

But now that he had actually met him, he didn't know what to make of him. He seems like a good person but with a force the size that he commands, what is he doing here? His army is too large for any exploration purpose, so they must have a destination in mind but where is that? Is he on conquest? Is Berk his next target? So many questions and not enough answers. Perhaps when the captains of the army are assembled, they'll get some answers.

Suddenly he was snapped out of his thoughts by Toothless surging forward, nearly knocking him over. "Toothless," Hiccup called after him. Toothless turned to look at him, an excited look in his eyes and that's when Hiccup realized that the sun had set. "Oh no," he groaned, ran a hand through his hair, and turned to Toothless. "I forgot buddy." With the day's events, Hiccup had forgotten to take Toothless on their usual flight around the island before sunset. He then turned to look at his house, his father probably waiting for him.

He turned back to Toothless, "I'll see what dad wants," he said, before placing a comforting hand on the dragon's head. "Then we'll go for a flight, okay?" Toothless hummed in acknowledgment. Hiccup then stood up and made his way to his house.

When he opened the front door, he saw his father rummaging through a chest. He then pulled out something long and bulky wrapped in a brown sheet; he placed one of his large hands on top of the bundle and smiled. "Dad?" Hiccup asked. Stoick jerked his head towards the door, a little startled. "Hiccup," he said. "I didn't hear you come in." Hiccup smiled, 'Sneaking up on Stoick the Vast,' he thought. 'Now that is a feat worthy of a tale or two.' "I... I have something for you," Stoick said in a soft voice.

He then held out the bundle to Hiccup, which he took. He unwrapped the sheet and beheld a small sword with a mail-shirt wrapped around the blade. "My father gave those to me when I was just about your age," Stoick said. "Now I want you to have them." Hiccup drew the sword from it's scabbard, the blade dark in the low-lit room. "Its called Endeavor," Stoick said. "Its been in our family for generations." The sword was just the right size for him, neither too long or too heavy.

Hiccup sheathed the sword, then took the mail-shirt and let it unfold to its full length. "That was the first armor I ever wore," he continued. "It served me well." Stoick took the shirt from Hiccup, "Let's see how it fits," he said. "Knowing how big you were at this age, Dad" Hiccup said as he placed the sword on a nearby chair, then removed his fur vest. "I'll probably go all the way through the collar."

Stoick rolled his eyes at his son's joke and held the shirt above Hiccup. He extended his arms upward and Stoick brought the mail-shirt down gently onto Hiccup's shoulders. At that moment, they were both reminded of when Hiccup was but a child and all the mornings his

father had helped him dress for the day. Both smiled at the memory as Stoick pulled the shirt down until the ends just barley touched Hiccup's knees; he then took a step back to see how his old armor fit his son.

"It fits..." Hiccup said, astonished. It was a little loose but for the most part it fit him perfectly, even the sleeves. "I had Gobber refit it a few years back," Stoick said. "I was uncertain if it would fit at this age but it seems Gobber was able to estimate your growth almost perfectly."

"That's lucky, I guess..." Hiccup said somberly. Just then he felt Toothless tug on the armor from behind. "Alright, alright," Hiccup said as Toothless let go. "We'll go flying now." "Make it a quick one," Stoick said. "You have a big day tomorrow." 'That's for sure,' Hiccup thought sarcastically. 'Being train by your hero's son. What could be better?' Hiccup and Toothless then went back into the night and took their usual flight. They were long gone by the time either Stoick or Hiccup realized that he had forgotten to remove the armor.

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Astrid ducked behind a stack of crates just as one of the square-shaped vessels pulled up alongside the dock that Wiglaf and Unferth were standing on. A mooring line was tossed to the two on the dock and was quickly tied off by Wiglaf. Then a gangplank dropped onto the pier and the two men from Geatland boarded the vessel. "How fair you, Wu?" Unferth asked with a wave. "I can smell the mead on your breath from here, Unferth," Song Wu said from the helm. "A warrior must only celebrate when it is truly the time to."

Song Wu was a man of average stature with almond-shape eyes and a matching brown color. He had a mustache at the corners of his mouth, a goatee just under his lower lip, and wore his hair in a braided ponytail called a queue. He, along with his men, wore armor made from rectangular-shaped iron plates laced into horizontal rows called lamellar.

"Save your philosophies for someone who needs them," Unferth said, insulted. "Wasn't it just this morning that my father told you not to take everything to heart?" Wiglaf asked. Unferth massaged the bridge of his nose and sighed, "I can handle the both you separately," he said. "But not at the same time." "How is the cargo?" he asked Wu. "Unspoiled," said Song Lei, Song Wu's 'son'. "Are you certain?" Unferth asked. "See for yourself," Wu said.

Two soldiers then pulled the grates above the cargo hold apart, Unferth and Wiglaf then peered into the hold and were pleased by what they saw. "He seems well enough," Lei said. "Looks can be deceiving," Wiglaf said as he dropped down into the hold. He stayed out of Astrid's sight for a few moments before climbing back up.

"Tell my father that he sleeps soundly and that I will stay with him for a time." Unferth nodded and bowed, "Come Wu," he said. "I believe it is time for the warriors to truly celebrate." With that, Unferth, Wu, Lei, and the rest of the crew departed from the ship, leaving Wiglaf 'alone'.

Astrid had to duck back into the shadows as Unferth and the other

soldiers passed by her. If she moved an inch, she would be seen. Lucky for her, they passed without seeing her but she stayed where she was until they passed from sight. She turned back to the ship and saw Wiglaf, kneeling down and peering into the hold.

"You want to stretch your legs?" he asked, resting his arms on his knee. He received no answer that she could hear.

"You're not just going to stay down in the dark, are you?" Again no answer.

But she did hear something from this time. But not from the hold of the ship but from above...

She looked up just in time to see a certain Night Furry fly overhead and continued Northward, as did Wiglaf. All of a sudden she heard a low growl emanating from the hold of the ship. "Hygelac?" Wiglaf asked, backing away from the hold. Suddenly a large, dark shape launched up into the air, hovered for a moment above the docks and shot off into night. Astrid stood up from her hiding place, mouth agape.

That's the second incredible surprise she's received this day; first the greatest hero of legend comes to their shores, now this. "Oh no," she heard Wiglaf breathe. He then turned back to the village and that's when he saw her.

"You," he called to Astrid, who barely registered that he was speaking to her. "You have a dragon, don't you?"

"I-I..." for the first time in long time, Astrid was unsure of what to do. "Do you?" he asked again, grabbing her shoulders rather forcibly. "Y-yes," Astrid said finally.

"Can it catch up to a Dark Seeker?" he asked. "Yes," she said. "Lead me to it," Wiglaf demanded.

"What?" Astrid asked.

"If we don't get to Hiccup before Hygelac does," Wiglaf said. "He'll kill him."

::

The air around them began to chill, causing Hiccup to shiver. "Why did I have to leave my vest at home?" he asked out loud, noting that the mail did little to keep him warm. "This may be a shorter flight than even Dad wants," Hiccup said. Toothless turned to him with a worried hum and a pleading look in his eye. "Don't worry, buddy," Hiccup said with a smile, patting Toothless' side. "I'm only joking" After he said this, Hiccup gave another shiver.

He looked down at the vast blackness of the ocean beneath him, hoping to spot any Tidal Class dragons, maybe a Scauldron or maybe a school of Thunder Drums. Hiccup was so preoccupied with what was below him, he didn't perceive what was above him. Fortunately, Toothless was paying attention and banked just in time to avoid a bolt of purple fire from above.

"Whoa Toothless," Hiccup asked, surprised by the sudden motion. Then

he heard a high pitched noise that told Hiccup exactly what was after them. "Move, Toothless," he said as the dragon went into a dive. They leveled out just before touching the water and sped forward across the surface. Hiccup turned to get a view of what was chasing them. When he did, feelings of awe, fear, and disbelief filled him and he urged Toothless to go as fast as he can. For what was chasing them was a very large, very angry Night Fury.

"Go, Toothless, go," Hiccup urged. He hadn't pushed Toothless like this in a long time, not since their fight with the Red Death. But as with both these instances, their very lives were at stake. He had looked into his eyes and he had seen the murderous intent raging within them.

'Wait a minute,' Hiccup thought. 'His eyes.' Hiccup risked another glance at their pursuer and to his horror found the dragon even closer. His suspicions, however, had been proven correct: the Night Fury's eyes were indeed blue. No time to dwell on that at the moment, for now they had to try and lose this dragon before it gets one of them (or both of them) killed.

"Okay, Toothless," Hiccup said. "We need to disappear." Toothless hummed in response and gained some height. They headed towards the woods, hoping to lose their pursuer in the thicker woods of Berk. And knowing the terrain of the island gave them the advantage... at least that is what Hiccup hoped.

::

"Why would a Night Fury go after another one?" Astrid asked atop Stormfly, which Wiglaf had referred to as an Arrow-tail. She and Wiglaf had taken to the skies in search of the Night Furies. Even though the idea had been Wiglaf's, he was still reluctant to be on Stormfly's back. "I think when Hiccup flew over the docks," Wiglaf said, from behind Astrid.

"Hygelac pick up their scent. He might have gone after them because he smelled Hiccup on Toothless." The names sounded foreign on Wiglaf's tongue. "So?" Astrid questioned. "So think about it," Wiglaf said. "Why would a man's scent be on a dragon's?" Astrid's eyes widened as she understood what Wiglaf meant. "He thinks Hiccup is Toothless' meal," she said. "That's what I believe," Wiglaf said. "So your dragon has some code of honor?" Astrid asked.

"Not necessarily," Wiglaf answered, ignoring that Astrid referred to Hygelac as 'his' dragon. "My guess is that earlier in his life," Wiglaf said. "Hygelac had enemies that ate the flesh of men." "...And he thinks that Toothless is one of those dragons," Astrid concluded. "Right," Wiglaf nodded. "Are you so certain that they will come to harm?" Astrid asked.

"Hiccup's dragon-bending skills won't save him here," Wiglaf said. "Hygelac has always been aggressive, especially with his enemies." Astrid's suspicions began to peak. "Who exactly is Hygelac," she asked. "I suppose there's no purpose in keeping it a secret," Wiglaf said. "My father will not be pleased, though..."

::

Hiccup's heart quickened as he raced through the forest, hoping to

evade the rogue dragon. While it had kept pace with them, it had fallen back a few feet, so Hiccup assumed it was getting tired. That brought little comfort to him, however...

If he was getting tired, then he might start getting desperate. And a desperate dragon was a deadly one.

"Toothless, we have to lose him," Hiccup said, fear seeping into his words. Toothless hummed in agreement before stealing a glance at the dragon chasing them.

If his eyes didn't behold it he would have never believed it to be true that this dragon was chasing him. Granted they hadn't parted on the best of terms but he could think of nothing that would warrant this.

Hiccup worked the pedal and they quickly banked to the left, then it dawned on Toothless...

Hiccup!

He was a fool. How many winters had they spent hunting their enemies, the Man-eaters? And now here he was covered in a man's scent. He should have been able to figure it out sooner.

If he didn't do something soon, he'll be overtaken. And at that point, he wasn't sure if he could protect Hiccup. Just as this thought crossed his mind, another fire-bolt flew right passed them and impacted a tree in front of them. The tree exploded in hail of fiery splinters, causing Hiccup to shield his eyes and Toothless to turn his head to do the same. This gave the rogue enough time to surge forward with a burst of speed and ram Toothless in the side. He slammed into a large tree, Hiccup was sent flying off of Toothless, sailed through the air, and landed in the dry riverbed of a clearing; with Toothless hitting the ground hard a few feet away from him.

"Toothless!" Hiccup exclaimed as he scrambled to his feet. While Hiccup had remained relatively unharmed in the crash, Toothless had received a few gashes on his left shoulder and the impact on the ground had not helped things. Before Hiccup could assess the damage, let alone dress the wounds, the rogue Night Furry landed at the other side of the clearing.

That's when all doubts about this dragon's identity left his mind. The blue eyes had aroused his suspicions at first but the scar over the left eye had confirmed them and Hiccup found Unferth's words from earlier ringing in his ears:

"A demon as black as night, scourge of the Geats..."

"Grendel," he whispered.

He was a large dragon, a size or two larger than Toothless, both broader and taller, and a few more battle scars as well. The most profound of these scars, other than the one over his eye, was a cross-shaped scar on the same shoulder as Toothless' wounds. He had the whiskers Beowulf had mentioned this morning but also a row of spikes going down his chin and ending at the base of his neck, while the plates on his head were more angular and pointed.

All these features lead Hiccup to believe that this Night Furry was much older than Toothless. He stood with a dignifying grace that filled Hiccup with a sense of awe and Toothless with a deep sense of longing. He had seen him like this before, many years ago in the mountains, where they and their pack made their final stand against the invaders. That felt like a lifetime ago, when the world was a simpler place and the works of man were as important to him as the labors of field mice. But now his old life had collided with his new one.

Would he understand?

Would he be able to fathom that this young boy means as much to him as he does?

Hiccup watched as the rogue's eyes shifted between the pair, a look of wariness shined in those deep, blue pools of his. It seemed that he had difficulty understanding his relationship with Toothless. He took a step forward and Toothless jumped to his feet, wincing at the pain it caused.

"Toothless," Hiccup called, moving to be by his dragon. Toothless took the opportunity to shield Hiccup from the rogue with his body. He may owe his life to this dragon many times over but he would die before he let any harm come to Hiccup.

"Toothless?" Hiccup asked, putting a hand on his shoulder, mindful of the wounds. Toothless took a glance at the boy, then training his eyes back to the other Night Furry. 'Is there some past between them?' Hiccup thought, recalling the events with the Whispering Death.

"Hiccup!" he heard someone call from above. He looked to the skies and saw Astrid and Wiglaf atop Stormfly.

"Astrid!" Hiccup called back.

"Hygelac!" he heard Wiglaf called, unsure of who he meant. He looked back at the rogue and found him looking at the new arrivals as well. Before Stormfly even touched the ground, Wiglaf jumped off the Nadder, with Astrid following suite. Wiglaf immediately ran towards the rogue Night Fury while Astrid ran towards Hiccup and Toothless.

"No, Wiglaf!" Hiccup called to the young Geat. "Its alright," Astrid said, when she reached the pair. Hiccup turned to her and found her smiling face a welcoming sight. "They know each other." Hiccup turned back to Wiglaf and the rogue, and found that he was nuzzling into Wiglaf's chest affectionately and Wiglaf responding in kind. "He's Grendel," Hiccup said, confused.

Toothless hummed, also in confusion.

"I know," Astrid nodded. Hiccup turned to her, mouth agape. "Wiglaf told me that Beowulf could not bring himself to kill Grendel," she said. "Instead he took him as a living trophy." "A few years later, Beowulf released him and he did not return..." she paused for a moment before continuing. "Until Beowulf fought his Mother."

"He came back to protect her," reasoned Hiccup, turning back to Wiglaf and the dragon. "No," Astrid said, shaking her head.

"To kill her."

"What?" Hiccup asked, turning back to her. "Wiglaf told me that when his father fought the Mother," Astrid said. "Grendel returned to aid Beowulf for sparing him." "When the battle was won," she continued. "Beowulf feared that his people would kill his new friend, so he took him to a temple and had his name changed to Hygelac, after their king." "Why a temple?" Hiccup asked at the conclusion of her story.

"It's a belief," Wiglaf said, approaching the teens and their dragons, with Hygelac in tow. "Among a group of people who share the faith of Christ, like my father, that if you bathe in waters blessed by a priest, your sins will wash away. When this happens, sometimes the priest will give you a new name, as if you are born a second time, and my father chose Hygelac."

"Why Hygelac?" Astrid asked. "In the lands of the Geats," Wiglaf answered. "No king was more loved than Hygelac. He protected Christians from persecution and decreed that all faiths should be respected." "After Hygelac's death," Wiglaf continued. "His son Heardred, knowing how beloved his father was, made it law that anything..." Wiglaf stopped, turned to Hygelac, and placed a hand on his undamaged shoulder. "Or anyone bearing the name of Hygelac could not be harmed by mortal hands." "Why did your father free him?" Hiccup asked. Wiglaf pursed his lips and looked away for a moment. "After my mother's death," he said. "My father fell into a deep depression and released Grendel, not caring what would happen."

"How is your dragon?" Wiglaf asked Hiccup, trying to steer the conversation elsewhere. "Oh," Hiccup said, nearly forgetting Toothless. He turned back to the injured dragon's shoulder to assess the damage. There were three gashes on his shoulder, all were bleeding but not profusely and none of them were too deep. "It's okay, buddy," Hiccup said, comfortingly. "We'll get you cleaned up."

He opened his saddlebag to retrieve the gauze and bandaging he kept in case of emergencies such as these. As he turned back to Toothless' shoulder, he saw Hygelac stretch forward and turned his head to the wound. Toothless gave him a growl of warning but was quickly silenced by one of Hygelac's own growls. Astrid and Hiccup were quite surprised about how easily Hygelac had gotten Toothless to back down. But they were even more surprised to see Hygelac begin licking the wound clean.

After a few moments, he pulled back, licked his chops, then closed his mouth. He then turned from the three teens and their dragons, walked to the other side of the clearing, laid down on the ground, curled up, and fell asleep with his back to them. They stared at his back for a moment before Hiccup broke the silence.

"Do you think they know each other?" he asked aloud. "It's possible they're even kin," Wiglaf said. He had no inkling of how right he was. After all, is there any closer in kinship than father and son? Under lighter circumstances, Toothless would have been ecstatic to see his father again; the circumstances to Hygelac, however, made no difference. Toothless was neither the first nor the last of

Hygelac's offspring and he had sired many children, so there was no reason that he could see for this to bring any sense of joy.

True, there was a time when Hygelac would protect a younger Toothless with his very life but that time had long since past and his duties as a father were no longer needed. His duties as a pack leader, however, would never falter.

"I better get him," Wiglaf said. "We have a long walk a head of us." Hiccup and Astrid exchange looks and then turned back to Wiglaf. "Why do you insist we walk?" Astrid asked. Wiglaf stopped halfway between the two Night Furies and turned back to Astrid. "How do you propose we get back then?" he asked. "Our dragons," she answered as if it was painfully obvious.

"Do you expect me to learn to fly before the night is out?" Wiglaf asked. "It isn't as hard as you might think," Hiccup said, after finishing dressing Toothless' wound. He went over to Wiglaf and the two young men went over to the sleeping dragon.

"You and Hygelac are already friends so that should make things a bit smoother," Hiccup said as they reached Hygelac. "To ride a dragon, there must be trust and respect between dragon and rider." Wiglaf nodded, "Hygelac," he called. The snoozing dragon turned to them, stood up, stretched and yawn, then walked over to Hiccup and Wiglaf. He looked at them with lazy eyes. "Stretch out your hand and you'll know he trusts you when he bows his head to let you on." Wiglaf glanced at Hiccup for a moment then back at Hygelac. He stretched forth his hand towards the elder Night Furry, who looked at his hand inquisitively.

In all the years that they had known each other, Wiglaf had never done anything like this before and this action confused him. But Hygelac had always trusted him and his instincts were telling him to trust him now. He bowed and placed his snout against the palm of his hand, starting a bond they neither would have ever deemed possible. "Now hold that for a moment," Hiccup said, before turning back to Astrid. "Can you get the rope from my bag?" he asked.

She nodded and went to Toothless' side and took the length of rope from the saddlebag. She rubbed his shoulder and gave a comforting smile to Toothless before heading over to Hiccup. She passed the rope off to him and stood to the side, watching the events unfold. Hiccup took the rope and went to Hygelac's side. The dragon watched as the boy approached him from the corner of his eye and emitted a low warning growl but was quieted by a shush from Wiglaf.

"Easy, easy," Hiccup said, holding his hand out, trying to reassure Hygelac. He then took the rope and laid it on top of his neck at the base of his shoulders then bent down and began tying the rope. "Make sure it isn't too tight," Wiglaf said. "I don't want to choke him." Hiccup smiled, finished his knot, then stood up.

"Alright," he said. "He should let you on now." Wiglaf slowly slowly pulled his hand away from Hygelac's snout and walked around to the his side, standing next to Hiccup. Hygelac lowered himself just enough for Wiglaf to get on. He gripped the rope and pulled himself onto Hygelac's back. "Its not too comfortable, is it?" Wiglaf asked with a smirk. "Yeah," Hiccup agreed with a smirk of his own. "We'll need to get you a saddle before too long but you should be fine

tonight." Hiccup turned and headed back to Toothless while Astrid returned to Stormfly.

"Are you comfortable with this?" Wiglaf asked Hygelac. He gave a hum that stressed boredom and yawned again, Wiglaf smiled again and patted him on the side. Hiccup gave Toothless' wound and made a mental note to change it when they got home before climbing onto his saddle. Astrid did the same and walked Stormfly over to the pair. "You know if anything happens to either of them," she said. "Beowulf won't be happy."

"Then let's make sure nothing happens to them," Hiccup said. "Keep your eyes open for any wild dragons." "With Toothless' injured shoulder," he continued. "I don't know how good in a fight we'll be."

"Just leave defense to me," she said, flexing her arm. "No problem," Hiccup said, then turned back to Wiglaf. "Are you ready?"

Wiglaf nodded.

"Alright," he said. "When you want him to go just nudge him with the heel of your foot."

Wiglaf nodded to show that he understood.

"Okay," Hiccup said. "Let's go."

Stormfly then launched off the ground into the night sky, followed by Toothless.

Wiglaf hung back for a moment then he lightly nudged Hygelac in the sides, causing the dragon to launch into the skies a bit faster than Wiglaf would have preferred.

End
file.